

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

The Rumpelstiltskin Syndrome

"Cut the red tape!" "Pare back the paperwork!" "Tell the bossy bureaucrats to butt out!" These angry cries are now echoing through Congress. Sound familiar? Sure. This same anger and these same complaints are widespread among school employees.

Not surprisingly, the kick-the-status-quo rambunctiousness of Capitol Hill's newcomers has a powerful appeal. Likewise, the Republican leadership's Contract With America—in its broad outlines, at least—can be highly seductive.

But beware. The devil is in the details, and the details here could be downright hellish, particularly when it comes to the future of our schools.

House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX) has all but admitted as much. Asked to offer specifics about funding cuts required by the Contract's balanced budget amendment, he refused: "Once members of Congress know exactly, chapter and verse, the pain that the government must live with in order to get a balanced budget," Armey explained, "their knees will buckle."

Indeed, the Treasury Department

estimates that to balance the federal budget by the year 2002 and pay for the Contract's proposed tax cuts, spending would have to be cut by \$1.3 trillion, a huge cut that would slash federal grants to states for education and other social services. California, for example, would lose more than \$10 billion annually in federal aid. In a few short years, Uncle Sam's contribution to education would go from stingy to scant.

This prospect only illustrates public education's long-standing predicament: As a nation, we talk a big game, but we balk at providing resources. In thousands of schools across America, NEA members already dip into their own pocketbooks to buy basic classroom supplies. Yet the same politicians who have shortchanged us think nothing of exhorting us to raise standards and create world-class public schools.

I'm reminded of one school employee who said she feels like the miller's



NEA President
Keith Geiger

daughter in the story "Rumpelstiltskin." "Elected officials," noted this teacher, "promise the public that we teachers can spin straw into gold." This teacher put her finger on a more general American delusion: the wishful notion that we can create first-rate public schools in an era of stagnant or shrinking education budgets. This delusion might be called the "Rumpelstiltskin syndrome."

The Rumpelstiltskin syndrome isn't confined just to Congress. Governors, from New Jersey to Virginia to California—states that would be devastated by cutbacks in federal aid—are applauding the Contract with America.

Indeed, several prominent governors are even touting their own mini-Contracts with America. They're promising tax cuts and smaller government—and shunting the cost of financing public schools to already hard-pressed school districts.

Government, these governors pious-

ly tell us, must get back to the basics. That's well and good. But what could be more basic than providing high-quality public education?

At some point, I'm convinced, the public is going to catch on to the cynical game these governors and their friends in Congress are playing. The public is going to see that spending cuts at the federal and state level translate into tax increases—and service cutbacks—at the local level. In short, the public is going to see that the Rumpelstiltskin politicians want to pass the buck, but not the bucks.

The polls back me up. A Washington Post-ABC News poll in January found overwhelming support—80 percent approval, 17 percent disapproval—for a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. But when those 80 percent were asked in a follow-up question whether they would still support the amendment if it meant cuts in federal spending on education, nearly two out of three said no.

Apparently, what the politicians ignore, the public understands full well: that "Rumpelstiltskin" is a fairy tale, not a realistic role model. School employees are people of wonderful talents and sterling dedication. But even they cannot spin straw into gold.

7 Happily Ever After

Watch for updated, animated versions of classic fairy tales—and listen for the famous multicultural



voices bringing them to life. Meet actor Robert Guillaume, the inspiration behind a new series debuting this month on HBO.

10 Inclusion Confusion

Just what does the federal government require when it comes to the placement of special education students?



NEA got some direct answers to your toughest questions—directly from the federal office responsible.

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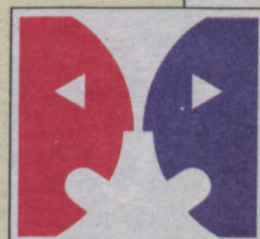
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When the student population at Brushy Creek Elementary in South Carolina shifted, educators shifted, too. Now technology rules the roost, achievement is up, and outsiders are peeking in the windows to get a glimpse of what this school is up to.



39 Debate: Does Suspension Work?

Yes, says a guidance coordinator from New York: it's an "effective and appropriate tool." "Not for my kids," counters a vice principal from Alabama: suspension is a "quick fix intended to relieve adult frustration."



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NATIONAL NEWS



BIG BIRD

or

BIG BUSINESS?

Congressional budget-cutters want to end federal support for public TV and radio. If Congress pulls the plug, could quality children's programming survive?

The battle on Capitol Hill to eliminate federal funding for public television and radio is more about philosophy than dollars.

Some members of Congress are asking if taxpayers should support public broadcasting at all. These legislators suggest privatizing as an easy way to save the federal government nearly \$400 million a year.

But a lot of educators, parents, and children are asking different questions. They want to know if commercializing public radio and television will lead to more educational programming. They want to know if the commercial broadcast networks stand ready to produce better children's shows.

The short answer? Not likely, not if past practice is any indicator.

For most of the last 20 years, critics of all political stripes have criticized the big three commercial networks for failing to air regular, ongoing quality

children's programming.

That criticism hasn't made much impact on the private networks. Some broadcasters have even tried to pass off cartoon spin-offs of popular toys as "educational" television. They haven't even tried to compete with the likes of *Sesame Street* or *Reading Rainbow*.

Still, lawmakers like Senator Larry Pressler (R-South Dakota) are determined to shift public broadcasting into

private hands.

Last month, Pressler told PBS officials to deliver carloads of records about their operations and even demanded that PBS stations complete questionnaires that asked for staff members' political affiliations. After a storm of criticism, Pressler backed off the political affiliation request—but he's still planning to hold hearings on ending federal support for public broadcasting.

The Capitol Hill critics of public broadcasting are making a variety of charges against PBS. Here's what they're saying—and the points supporters of public broadcasting, including NEA, are making in response.

► *Public broadcasting is elitist.*

Hardly. The public broadcasting audience reflects the diversity of America—in race, income, and education.

An example: A 1994 Nielsen study revealed that 56.5 percent of PBS-viewing households have incomes below \$40,000, only about 3 percent less than the 59.9 percent national average.

Each week, nearly 97 million Americans are informed by public television programming.

► *Public broadcasting is outmoded and unnecessary in these days of cable.*

Cable television does showcase some outstanding educational programming. But cable costs—average cable-viewing households spend \$400 a year on cable—and nearly 40 percent of American homes remain "unhooked," either because they can't afford cable or because cable lines don't extend into their geographic area.

Public television, meanwhile, costs each taxpayer roughly 80 cents a year—and that taxpayer support helps produce nearly 1,500 hours of easily accessible children's programming.

PBS programs reach 30 million students and 2 million teachers. And PBS is the nation's largest supplier of college telecourses. Some PBS affiliates spend as much as 75 percent of their budgets on educational programming.

► *The public doesn't want to pay for public broadcasting.* Not so, according to a poll conducted last fall by Opinion Research Corp., a Princeton, New Jersey-based survey group. Fully 84 percent of Americans, the study found, favor keeping public television. Some 49 percent believe federal funding support for public TV should go up.

Are we destined to see Big Bird become just another corporate-controlled chicken? You can shape the fate of public broadcasting. Check the box below—and stay tuned.

What You Can Do

The future of federal support for public broadcasting is, quite literally, up to the public. You can help save public TV and radio by contacting your representative and senators in Congress.

Let your lawmakers know how you use public broadcasting in your school. The more specifically you can describe the impact public broadcasting has on your students, the more impact your comments will have.

Address your representative at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515 and your senators at U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

HEROES & ZEROES



A Shake-Rattle-and-Roll Award to singer Billy Joel, who donated the

profits from his Japanese concert tour to the victims of the Kobe earthquake. Joel, who was in Kobe at the time of the quake, was uninjured.



A Shadow-of-Darkness Award to the Points of Light Foundation for

squandering the opportunity to support volunteer efforts nationwide. It seems that in four years, the Foundation spent \$35.8 million—\$26.6 million of that from the federal government—while giving only \$4 million to service organizations. Someone should shed some light here. Any volunteers?



A Purple Heart to Jamestown, New York counselor Kara Reed

who turned her own adversity into an opportunity to educate others. Reed, severely injured during a school renovation when hazardous chemicals weren't properly ventilated to the outside, urged a Congressional committee recently to toughen indoor air quality standards. "No child should have to fear for their health or life when it comes to the air they breath," she said, "especially in a school." Amen.



A Book-Banning Booby Prize to Hempfield (Pennsylvania) Area

schools for pouncing on a complaint about "offensive" words in works by prominent African-American writers Ralph Ellison and Nikki Giovanni. Administrators ignored their own established review process and promptly removed the literature text selected by teachers and approved by the school board. Hey—policies to the wind when dangerous words descend!



A Reach-Out-and-Teach-Someone Award to Sprint-United Telephone

and Picture Tel of Kansas City, Missouri for making a homebound 10-year-old girl smile. When the two companies heard that Emily Gessner, recovering from a bone marrow transplant, longed to go to school, they quickly arranged a video hookup between her home and fifth grade classroom. Said Emily's mom, "I think the expression on her face said it all."

COVER STORY

REALITY

SETS IN



Twenty-two-year-old Leza Francis is finding out how little her \$20,000 first-year salary buys. And that's not her only surprise.

It was a hot, muggy day last August in Pensacola, Florida. Despite a new degree in English education, Leza Francis was working as a receptionist in a doctor's office.

The classroom seemed far away, until the phone rang.

With just five days before school was to start, Tate High School in Pensacola needed someone to teach 9th grade English—on a substitute basis at first, but possibly full-time. Francis accepted immediately. And, just a few weeks later, the permanent job came through.

"When they told me I was full-time, I went 'YES!'" Francis recalls, "I was so happy."

Then reality set in.

"I knew the salary wasn't that great," Francis says, "but I didn't know the exact figure until I got the job."

The exact figure: \$20,770. That's about \$500 below the Southeast average starting teacher salary of \$21,310 (see chart at right) and \$2,200 below the \$22,898 national average starting salary released by Michigan State University (see chart at far right).

Starting salaries like Francis's both at Escambia (Florida) Education Association President Pam Schwartz.

"Escambia County teacher salaries are below average for the state, and state salaries are low to begin with," Schwartz says.

By NEA's own statistics, Florida's

teachers rank 41st when it comes to average salaries, making about \$4,000 less than the national average.

"We're especially concerned that our county salary schedule isn't keeping up with our neighbors in the Panhandle," Schwartz says.

The reasons will sound familiar to teachers nationwide.

"There's stiff competition from health care and criminal justice for scarce funds," notes Schwartz. "And the state lottery, which was supposed to enhance general school aid, is now supplanting general revenue."

"It's hard to get money for salaries," she adds, "when you can't get it for programs."

What's life like on \$20,770? It's hardly independence, Francis says.

"I'm living at home with my parents," she says, "and it'll be awhile before I'll have enough money to

move out."

Francis says she's postponing all major purchases except a car, which she was forced to buy to get back and forth to school. Grad school's in the cards—but out of the picture until she can save some more money.

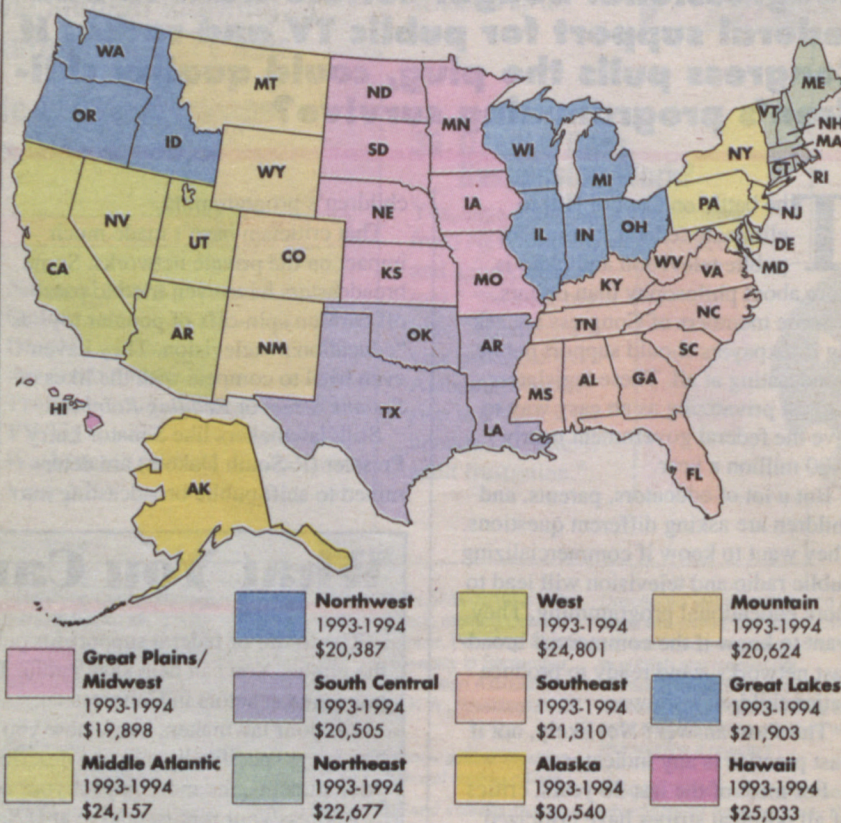
In addition to routine living expenses—food, clothes, gasoline, and insurance—Francis, like most teachers, will spend about \$400 buying supplies to supplement what she gets from the Escambia County School District.

Francis has no home of her own, and no classroom either. Because of overcrowding at Tate High, Francis doesn't have an assigned classroom.

"It's not that I mind going to differ-

By Region, West Is Best

In most states, salaries for beginning teachers vary district by district. This chart shows average beginning salaries by region, ranging from more than \$30,000 in Alaska to less than \$20,000 in the Midwest states. Salaries reflect pay for those with bachelor's degrees. Pay rates for beginning teachers with master's degrees are, on average, a few thousand dollars higher.



Source: Association for School, College, and University Staffing, 1993-94

COVER STORY

Leza Francis shops for classroom supplies. She figures to spend \$400 of her own money on workbooks, poster board, and other materials.

ent classrooms, because that way I get to meet all the English teachers and get

to know the school," Francis says. "I just want that little desk that says I'm the teacher. It seems that college was giving us the image that every classroom would be a textbook classroom: no more than 25 kids, computers for everyone, and this and that and all the things that make it a perfect environment."

In real life, Francis

has up to 36 kids in every class, just a few computers, and there's not much "this and that" when you're floating from room to room.

But the transition from college to classroom is rarely a smooth one—and Francis knows that. Although she says she got a good education at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, Francis acknowledges she wasn't quite prepared for the realities of teaching.

"I want to teach my students the things that were traditionally taught—the classics, grammar, and writing—essential English skills. But I don't want it to be boring. So many kids hate English," she says. "I want my classroom to be a place where students enjoy reading and writing."

To achieve that goal, Francis tries different approaches.

"One day we were reading *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe. We'd finished reading it early and were talking about it. They were a pretty wired, creative group of kids, so I said, 'Let's do a skit.'"

She divided the class into groups, told them to pick one scene and act it out. Five minutes later, "I ended up with some of the most ingenious skits you'll ever see. They took the last scene with the heart thumping and were going around the room, pounding on stuff to find just the right sound for the heart to beat.

"It had come so alive for them that there was a certain way that heart had to sound for each group. They must have gotten something out of the story to have had that much of an image in their minds," she adds.

As she struggles to reach each and every child, Francis says she wishes she'd learned more in college about

Teaching Low on the Pay Pole

No surprise: Beginning teachers earn a heck of a lot less than beginning engineers. In fact, beginning teachers earn less than beginners in almost every comparable profession.

Academic Majors

Bachelor's Degree Graduates

Estimated Starting Salary for 1993-94

Chemical Engineering	\$40,689
Computer Science	\$32,762
Nursing	\$30,078
Accounting	\$28,022
Financial Administration	\$26,838
General Business Admin.	\$23,950
Human Resource Mgt.	\$23,187
Education	\$22,898
Retailing	\$22,195
Advertising	\$21,870
Liberal Arts/Arts & Letters	\$21,124
Telecommunications	\$20,821

Averages for Graduate Degree

MBA	\$39,507
Masters	\$35,934
Ph.D.	\$38,686

Source: Average annual starting salaries for 1994-95 graduates were used from the Collegiate Employment Research Institute, 1994. *Salary Report (1993-94)* (Interim Report for October 31, 1994). East Lansing, Michigan: Career Development and Placement Services, Michigan State University; and the College Placement Council's *Salary Survey for 1993-94*. September 1994. Bethlehem, PA; College Placement Council Inc.

how to handle students who misbehave.

"If a student starts cussing you out, you can write them up and send them to a dean, but what good does that do? The kid still has the upper hand and other kids know it," she says.

There's one thing they didn't teach Francis in college that she's picked up easily on her own—the three Bs, "beg, borrow, or buy."

"Teachers are the worst pack rats," Francis notes. "I've learned that when you get something good, you keep it so that you can use it again some day."

First-year teachers don't have a reserve built up.

"So when I need something, I go to other teachers and ask if they have anything that will help me," Francis explains. "If they have something they can give me, I beg for it. If they have one copy, I borrow it. And if nobody has anything and I need it, I go buy it."

But that's okay, she adds.

"It's important to get the things you need. It's my responsibility," says Francis. "These students are in my classroom to learn from me. If I show them I care that much, sooner or later, it will sink into enough of them, and they'll decide learning isn't too bad."

With all the first-year encounters—from low pay to overcrowded rooms—does Francis think she'll make it?

"I'm determined to," Francis says firmly. "I've always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was a little girl and watched my mother teach.

"My mom was able to bring out such

neat things in the kids. She could make things so simple and make them understand it to the point it seemed like she knew everything.

"For me," Francis continues, "the biggest hurdle was the first semester—and that's over. Now I've got a grasp on things, and I've had a lot of help from my colleagues. With God's help, I'm getting through this."

—Cindy West

Resources

If you're a beginning teacher—or a veteran lending a hand to one—check out these helpful resources from NEA. To order, write the NEA Professional Library at P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516 or call toll-free 800/229-4200.

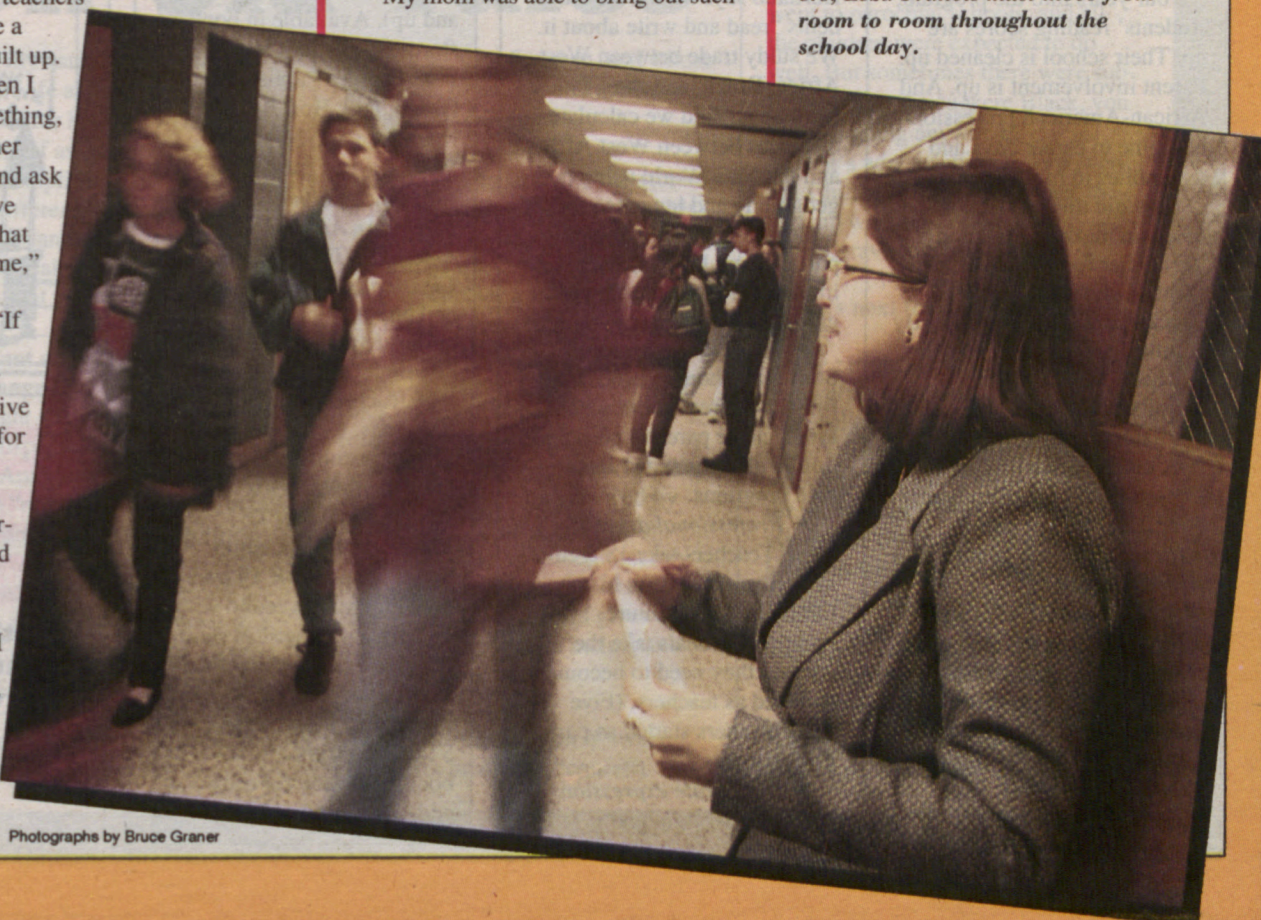
► *Countdown to the First Day of School* is a checklist that can help any teacher be better prepared for the new school year. NEA Checklist Series, Stock No. 2150-9-00-F. \$4.95 plus s&h.

► *Classroom Encounters: Problems, Case Studies, Solutions* offers tips on discipline, communication, assessment, and classroom management. Stock No. 3001-X-00-F. \$19.95 plus s&h.

► *The First-Year Teacher: Teaching With Confidence* will help create feelings of competency and instill confidence in new teachers. Stock No. 1862-1-00-F. \$18.95 plus s&h.

► And don't forget NEA Online, NEA's electronic online network. You can swap ideas and lesson plans with colleagues around the country and download valuable Association materials. For more information about NEA Online, see page 30.

As one of Tate High's newest teachers, Leza Francis must move from room to room throughout the school day.

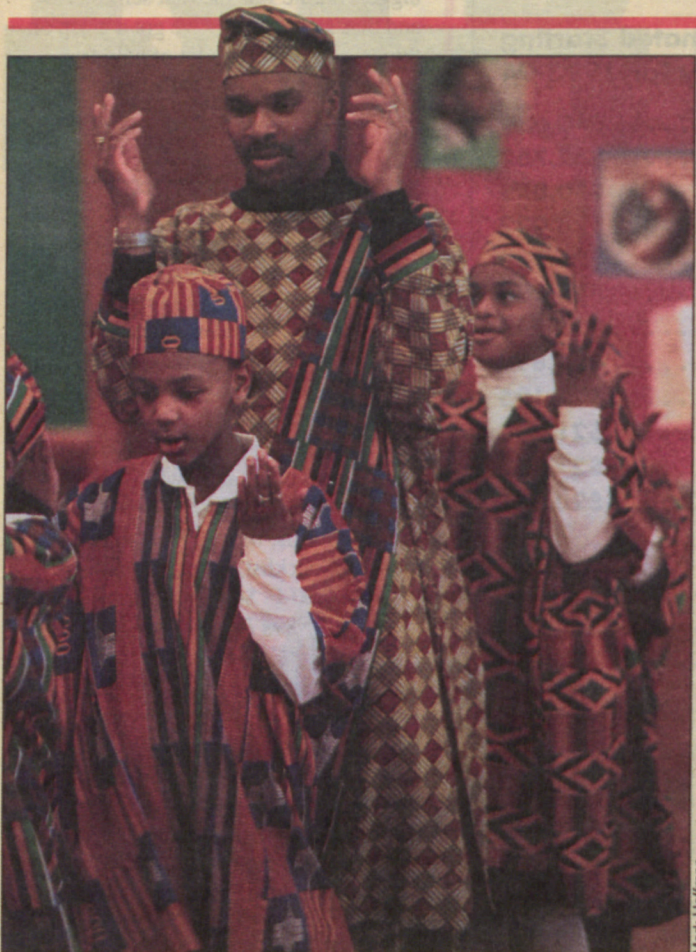


Photographs by Bruce Graner

HUMAN RIGHTS

Culture Goes with Curriculum

An African-American immersion program in Milwaukee eliminates the cultural barrier to learning.



Music teacher Moses Denson performs with students during special celebration activities.

Josephine Mosley wears African dress often, and Jordan does so occasionally. All students wear uniforms. And staff decorate classrooms and hallways with African and African-American art.

► *Multi-year pairings of teachers and students.* For two to three years, students stay with the same teacher.

"Regardless of ethnic or social class concentration, a key ingredient of learning is high self-esteem," says school principal Josephine Mosley.

"We raise our kids' self-esteem by immersing them in academics and culture—something other minority, majority, and integrated schools can do, too."

—Mary Faber

Resources

King Elementary staff like these resources:

► Just Us Books, 356 Glenwood Ave., 3rd fl., East Orange, NJ 07017. Send a stamped (\$0.52), self-addressed, #10 envelope for a catalogue. Titles include the *Afro-Bets Book of Black Heroes from A to Z* and the *Afro-Bets First Book About Africa* (ages 7 and up). Available in bookstores.

► Peoples Publishing Group, P.O. Box 70, Rochelle Park, NJ 07622. Write for free catalogue. Titles include *In Our Own Image: An African-American History*, and *Classical Africa* (grades 5 and up), and the *Multi-cultural Messenger*, a newsletter for administrators, teachers, and librarians.

► Winston-Derek Publishers, P.O. Box 90883, Nashville, TN 37209. Its "Fred Crump Series" consists of 15 traditional fairy tales retold with an African-American slant. Available in bookstores for \$6.95 each or from the publisher at \$6.95 each plus \$2.05 s&h for the first book, plus \$.50 for each additional book.

When we reach the letter Z, for Shaka Zulu, we learn of the greatness of Africa and talk about conflict and peace."

Hartlaub, who teaches grades 2-5, has a master's degree in international education and was a Peace Corps volunteer in Sierra Leone. In teaching about the slave trade, Hartlaub says he and his students "read and write about it. We study trade between West Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean. And we calculate distances between West Africa and the New World using both geography and language arts."

But teaching is only one part of King Elementary's immersion program. The program also promotes:

► *Outreach to parents.* Staff make home visits, and a full-time parent coordinator arranges for parental participation in classroom and in-service programs.

► *Professional development.* Teachers take 18 credits in African-American history, family life, and culture. Paraprofessionals take the courses they need to become certified as teachers. (Five King teachers started as paraprofessionals.)

► *Deliberate expressions of ethnic pride.* Principal

Students at Martin Luther King, Jr., Elementary School in downtown Milwaukee learn what other elementary students learn—with one critical difference. While they're learning it, they're immersed in African and African-American perspectives and culture.

Four years into the program, students' reading scores are up. Their school is cleaned up. Parent involvement is up. And African-American professionals come to career days and assemblies to motivate kids.

How did this immersion program make school (and life) better for its 560 K-5 students—who are 99 percent Black and 94 percent poor? By simple changes, say two of its teachers, NEA members Vernice Jordan and Joe Hartlaub.

A kindergarten teacher with a master's degree in computer education, Jordan infuses African-American culture in all she teaches.

"For example," says Jordan, "when we learn the alphabet, the letter A stands for Louis Armstrong. We pretend to blow a horn and sing at a nightclub. The letter B is for Benjamin Banneker, who helped plan Washington, D.C."

WASHINGTON WATCH

Person To Watch



Senator **Nancy Kassebaum** (R-Kansas) is the first woman to chair the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, which handles federal policy on elementary and secondary public education, labor law, antitrust issues, health care, welfare reform, job training programs, child care, and more.

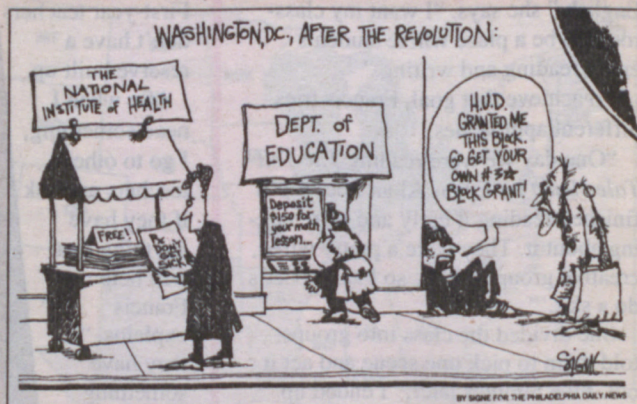
Changes, Changes, Changes...

Brief notes about major changes in the nation's capital: Technology has come to Congress—the House, Senate, and White House are now online, and 42 members of Congress have electronic mailboxes...The House Education and Labor Committee is now the House Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee. New chair is Bill Goodling (R-PA)...Education subcommittees with new names are: Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, which is now Early Childhood, Youth, and Families; Postsecondary Education and Training, which is now Postsecondary Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning; Labor Standards, Occupation, Health, and Safety, which is now Workforce Protections.

What You Can Do

Key issues on the docket: school safety legislation that originally passed as part of last year's crime bill, and federal funding of vocational education and special education. Let your representatives—particularly the newest ones—know your feelings about these issues.

Political Cartoon of the Month



Congressional

Quote of the

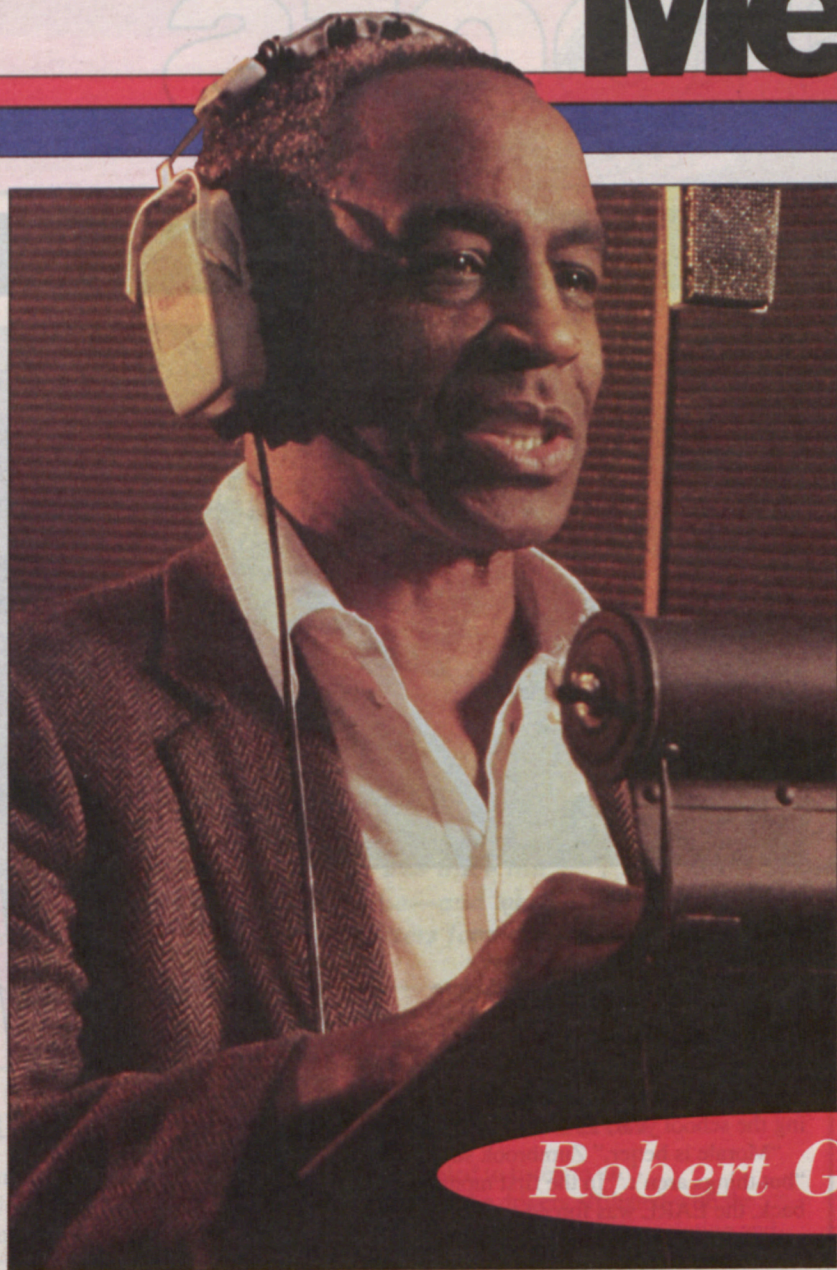
Month

"The great strength of America...has always been our ability to associate with people who were different from ourselves and to work together to find common ground....We simply cannot wait for a tornado, a fire, or a flood to behave like Americans ought to behave."

—President Bill Clinton

(1995 State of the Union Address)

Meet:



Robert Guillaume

Sinbad as the frog prince? Rosie Perez as Hansel and Gretel's hungry witch? Margaret Cho starring in "The Princess and the Pea"?

These are the voices of "Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales for Every Child," a new animated series beginning on HBO this month. The series is based on a collection of books retelling Grimm's fairy tales with multicultural characters.

Who's the inspiration behind this retelling of tales? Actor, singer, producer Robert Guillaume, who helped create the books and who narrates the HBO series. Best known as an actor who refuses to pigeonhole himself or his characters—remember how his TV character Benson rose from butler to Lt. Governor?—Guillaume has applied his usual attitude to this venture into children's literature.

NEA Today staff writer Anita Merina spoke to Guillaume about breaking new ground—and old traditions.

Why remake Grimm's fairy tales? Why not promote original tales? Because Grimm's tales are ubiquitous. Everybody knows them, recognizes them. When my parents read them to me, I enjoyed them.

New Twist On Old Tales

When my daughter Rachel was born, my wife and I wanted something more for her. We wanted her to see herself as that princess. This series accomplishes that by trying to make a difference to children of different races and cultures—showing them they really can be that princess, that prince, that emperor.

But it's not only the faces that have changed.

That's right. HBO asked well-known Hispanic, Asian, and African-American writers and composers to "rewrite" these tales, using details from their own cultures as material.

Snow White, for example, becomes *White Snow* and is set in a Native American landscape. In this story, she's born in the middle of a blizzard—that's how she gets her name—and children learn about the Native American traditions involved

in naming children.

Imagine *Beauty and the Beast* set in Africa or Cinderella dancing to mariachi music. In this series, Little Red Riding Hood becomes Little Red Happy Coat, giving us a richness of Chinese-American images. That's what makes these shows so special.

Did you have any trouble finding actors for the series?

No. This is an extraordinary cast—Denzel Washington in *Rumpelstiltskin*, Tone Loc and Harry Belafonte in *Jack and the Beanstalk*. We've cast Sonia Braga, Graham Greene, Whoopi Goldberg, B.D. Wong, and Edward James Olmos, just to name a few.

Many of them came to this project because my wife and I asked them and because they suspected there was something excellent about it. But they also did it because they'd never heard or seen anything like it. They said, "Why not a different face in all these fairy tales?"

Who wouldn't want to play Rumpelstiltskin as a Jamaican with dreadlocks or a Cinderella whose

kids' books?

When my wife and I couldn't find multicultural books, we decided we'd help create them. So, we formed a publishing company called Confetti Entertainment, contacted writer Naomi Fox, and developed the "confetti kids," a group of 10 students with different backgrounds, who perform the fairy tales for their school classmates and, in the process, create their own versions.

Currently there are six books available: *The Frog Prince*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Shoemaker and the Elves*, *The Valiant Tailor*, and *A Different Kind of Christmas*.

We then passed on the idea to folks at HBO, who jumped at the chance to do the series. Confetti is coproducing the show, and I'm proud to be its narrator.

Are you intent on changing TV's portrayal of minorities?

Yes, you could say that. When I did the TV show "Benson," I was trying to impart the sense of a man who was empowered. He was of the impression that, by his own industry, he could succeed and achieve the American dream—even in the face of people who may have been prejudiced.

But I wasn't trying to convey that he was the smartest person around and that white people were stupid, though that's what some people got out of it. It was about a man who saw an opportunity, took advantage of it, and didn't look back.

What about your own opportunities? Was education key?

Education was very important. I went to parochial schools, and all the children were expected to do well. But sometimes there were subtle hints that if you were Black, you weren't going anywhere.

That's why teaching is so powerful. Children pick up the vibes, they pick up what you're *not* saying—it's such a grave responsibility.

What's next for you and "confetti kids"?

We're producing three more books, and we're even hoping to produce materials for school use. We've come a long way from the time when my wife and I were searching for multicultural books and not finding any. If we can get these books in the school system, that would be a landmark for me.

Each book in the series is \$9.95 (add \$3 s&h, California residents add 8.2 percent sales tax). Contact Confetti Entertainment, 15250 Ventura Blvd. Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, 818/783-6251. For more on the HBO series, see page 16.

iguanas become footmen, and whose jalapenos, tomatoes, and avocados become her carriage?

Are you trying to make the stories more interesting to minority kids?

No, I won't say more interesting because people can get their backs up over whether a story told from one point of view is more interesting than another. It's just about differences. Different faces in the same roles, different contexts for those roles.

Studies have shown that children need the imagination provided by fairy tales—the tales teach them self-empowerment through victory over the wolf, the witch. Seeing themselves in these roles gives our children a new—more inclusive—vision of the world.

What's the connection between this series and your "confetti

Grassroots

State

MASSACHUSETTS

State legislators recently grounded a ballot initiative to allow public aid to private schools by a 107-to-87 vote. After two years of intensive lobbying, Massachusetts Teachers Association members and other public education advocates were pleased.

"The amendment could have unfairly drained millions of dollars from our public schools at a time of tremendous need," says MTA President Robert Murphy. "It was a wonderful victory for public education."

MONTANA

Massive lobbying by Montana Education Association members paid off recently when voters passed a referendum to protect public pension funds from potential raids by a cash-starved state legislature. Passage of the amendment also assures that taxes won't be increased in the future to pay for inadequately funded pension programs.

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Education Association members added their voices to the education reform debate in January when they released a 37-point plan that calls for—among other things—tougher graduation requirements, effective school safety programs, parent-resource centers, and full-day kindergarten. Says CEA President Robert Eagan: "In our plan, there are no fads, no gimmicks, no fuzzy notions—just a practical reform agenda that will work."

OVERSEAS

Help is now at hand for overseas teachers who face a serious illness but lack enough sick leave to cover their treatment period. Recently, President Clinton signed a bill that directs the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) to establish a voluntary sick leave bank.

Drafted by the Overseas Education Association, the bill allows educators to donate leave to a colleague threatened by a health crisis. "We wanted to find a way to help our teachers get through traumatic times in their lives," explains OEA President Jack Rollins. "This legislation takes away their worry and helps them concentrate on the healing process."

Picket Fences

It couldn't have gotten much uglier. Last fall, after eight months of fruitless bargaining, more than 400 Round Lake teachers, secretaries, and instructional assistants went out on strike.

They were greeted by administration tactics that would have made J.P. Stevens proud—security fences, police patrols at a cost of \$2,600 a day, even the hiring of 60 replacement workers.

"They did their best to break our union," says Education Association of Round Lake President Terri Zumbrook, "but their strong-arm tactics just made us stronger."

For eight weeks, while educators picketed, the bargaining teams came to agreement on nearly all non-monetary issues. But when it came to money, Zumbrook says, "we became convinced they were never going to give us a fair financial offer." Finally, both sides agreed to submit financial items to an arbitrator.

While waiting for the arbitrator's decision, Association members went back to work on December 12, working straight through winter break. They'll make up all lost days by work-

IN ILLINOIS



In Round Lake, northwest of Chicago, school board members hired police and put up security fences in a vain effort to intimidate 400 Association members, on strike for eight weeks.

ing through spring break and extending the school year.

"Morale is better," Zumbrook says, "but things aren't." In the first month back, the EARL was forced to file 14 grievances for settlement violations.

Robert Babiak

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Fewer Kids, Fewer Caps

The nation's public schools graduated an estimated 2,255,095 students in 1993-94—or about 330,000 fewer than were graduated five years earlier. Since graduation rates are up and dropout rates down, these numbers merely reflect changing demographics. There are fewer teenage students, and therefore, fewer graduates. But watch out for that swinging pendulum—as younger students (baby boomlet-ers) grow up, these numbers will rise again.



Public high school graduates, by state: 1993-94

State	Estimated 1993-94	Percent change, 1988-89 to 1993-94	State	Estimated 1993-94	Percent change, 1988-89 to 1993-94
UNITED STATES	2,255,095	-8.3	Missouri	46,870	-9.8
Alabama	36,146	-16.8	Montana	9,735	-7.2
Alaska	5,914	5.0	Nebraska	17,347	-7.2
Arizona	29,100	-8.8	Nevada	9,440	-0.3
Arkansas	25,279	-9.5	New Hampshire	9,524	-16.0
California	261,600	6.9	New Jersey	66,474	-12.8
Colorado	32,440	-8.7	New Mexico	15,250	-1.5
Connecticut	26,950	-12.7	New York	137,500	-11.0
Delaware	5,270	-13.7	North Carolina	58,345	-16.6
District of Columbia	2,984	-16.3	North Dakota	7,659	-5.2
Florida	91,992	1.4	Ohio	100,000	-20.0
Georgia	59,493	-3.9	Oklahoma	30,000	-18.4
Hawaii	9,332	-10.3	Oregon	27,175	1.0
Idaho	13,300	6.2	Pennsylvania	101,760	-14.4
Illinois	105,295	-9.7	Rhode Island	7,511	-12.2
Indiana	56,600	-11.0	South Carolina	32,300	-12.7
Iowa	30,043	-12.4	South Dakota	8,213	0.4
Kansas	25,176	-6.2	Tennessee	44,128	-9.1
Kentucky	37,060	-4.7	Texas	160,087	-9.5
Louisiana	33,316	-10.4	Utah	28,162	22.8
Maine	13,070	-5.7	Vermont	5,385	-9.7
Maryland	39,766	-13.2	Virginia	58,410	-10.1
Massachusetts	45,656	-20.4	Washington	48,389	-1.1
Michigan	88,800	-12.8	West Virginia	20,545	-10.2
Minnesota	48,570	-8.6	Wisconsin	52,488	-4.6
Mississippi	23,276	-4.0	Wyoming	5,970	-1.8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data surveys. (This table was prepared in April 1994.)

IN KENTUCKY



Robert Bruck

HOUSED IN HISTORY: Dressed in historically appropriate garb, elementary teacher Pat Fox greets students for a tour of what was once the county's first one-room schoolhouse—and what is now both a museum and headquarters for the

Hopkins County Education Association. Hundreds of students from western Kentucky will take field trips to the school this year. A nostalgic note: Fox, a former president of HCEA, was also one of the last students to be taught at the school.

IN ARKANSAS

Bus Drivers Know Their Math

Promises made to unorganized employees are often broken. But once 50 support workers—40 of them bus drivers—became the North Little Rock ESP, district promises were as good as money in the bank.

Three years ago, the North Little Rock school district made a change in bus drivers' pay formula. Despite administration promises that drivers' pay would be unaffected, "we were making less money," asserts Faye Taylor, a veteran driver. "And no one

wanted to listen to us."

So the drivers affiliated with the Arkansas Education Association and formed a committee to pressure the administration.

Since then, they've won a 4 percent raise, seven months of back pay at the higher rate, plus annual raises to boot. Some employees are making nearly 10 percent more this year than last.

"Since we joined the AEA, the district's really paid attention to our concerns," Taylor says.



Rick Eoff

Members of the North Little Rock ESP, from left to right: Rev. Richard Jeffrey, Mary Hollister, Faye Taylor, Michelle Carter, Ray Hollister, and Teddy Clarks.

IN CALIFORNIA

Risky Business Jeopardizes Schools

What happens to a school district when its county government goes belly up?

That's no theoretical question in Orange County, site of the largest municipal bankruptcy in United States history. After losing \$2.2 billion in reckless Wall Street investments, the county declared bankruptcy in December, putting its 37 school districts in deep financial peril.

Facing down fear of draconian measures, California Teachers Association President Del Weber pledged that CTA would do everything possible to protect the rights of its members and keep schools open for the students.

"We are prepared to take legal action," Weber said, "if elected officials are reluctant or unable to protect

education budgets."

The roots of this crisis date back to 1978 when California voters approved the now infamous Proposition 13. The initiative severely rolled back property taxes and limited tax increases.

Since then, California municipal treasurers have been under pressure to generate higher returns on investments, and that's caused them to choose investment strategies many public entities consider far too risky.

No treasurer took more risks—and lost more—than Orange County's investment honcho, Robert Citron. And its schools are feeling the loss.

Among the worst hit is the Irvine Unified School District, which had about \$103 million invested in the fund—\$56 million of it borrowed. The

Placentia Unified School District reportedly sank \$84 million in the county fund.

"We expect the county to completely restore the financial losses incurred by all 187 different entities that invested in the Orange County trust," asserts Randy Dennis, president of the Association of Placentia Linda Educators.

"The County Board of Supervisors holds the purse strings," Dennis says, "and unless it starts making some responsible decisions soon, there will be long-range effects felt throughout the state and nation."

To instill future responsibility, the state—prodded by the CTA and others—is looking to put stricter controls on investments of public funds.

Local

MISSOURI

"Young people, we care about you. Care about yourself. Think! AIDS kills." That's the message Center Education Association members are broadcasting to the entire South Kansas City community via billboard.

"AIDS is a killer," says CEA President Charles Smith, "and that message has to go beyond the classroom. We're concerned for our children's lives."

Odegard Outdoor Advertising donated billboard space in six locations. CEA members paid for art and printing.

PENNSYLVANIA

"Fundamental education reform is impossible in an unsafe environment. School safety has to be our first priority." So says Allentown Education Association President Dick Kotran, explaining AEA's deep involvement in the community-based, 100-member Violence Prevention Coalition.

So far, the Coalition has established a districtwide weapons policy, individual school safety plans, peer mediation programs, student support groups, and a school-based probation program.

GEORGIA

Mother's Day, 1994. A drive-by shooting in Columbus leaves an eighth-grader dead. The next day, students at his school form Project SAVE—Students Against Violence Everywhere.

"SAVE's message is a simple one: violence is not the answer to anyone's problems," explains NEA member Katie Gemes, the SAVE faculty advisor. Gemes and the group scheduled a week of anti-violence activities this spring.

OKLAHOMA

Used to be that employee salaries were the last item put into the Tulsa school district's budget—often after lengthy, rancorous negotiations between the district and the Tulsa Classroom Teachers' Association.

No more. Now, TCTA negotiates the teacher salary schedule early in the calendar year—and it goes right into the budget. "Last year," explains Dale Orr, a TCTA director, "we negotiated a \$5.3 million increase in the schedule, then settled the non-monetary items in three meetings."

IN THE CLASSROOM

INCLUSION

What Does The Law Require?

More and more, schools are assigning children with disabilities to regular classrooms.

But the practice, called "inclusion," can be problematic if staff don't get the time, training, and extra hands necessary to make it work.

Is inclusion really required by federal law? Must all students with disability be educated in regular classrooms?

To find out, NEA's 20-member special committee on inclusion recently put 24 questions to the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, which enforces the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the main federal law on students with disabilities. Below are excerpts from the response.*

What does federal law require and not require with respect to inclusion?

Federal statutes do not use the term "inclusion." The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school districts to place students in the least restrictive environment (LRE) [for that student]. The regular classroom in the school the student would attend if not disabled is the first placement option considered before a more restrictive placement is considered, [but] IDEA does not require that every student with a dis-

ability be placed in the regular classroom regardless of individual abilities and needs. [In fact,] placing disabled students in the regular classroom without providing them with necessary aids and supports, as reflected in their IEPs**, would violate federal law.

Is it legal to consider the impact on students in the classroom who don't have a disability?

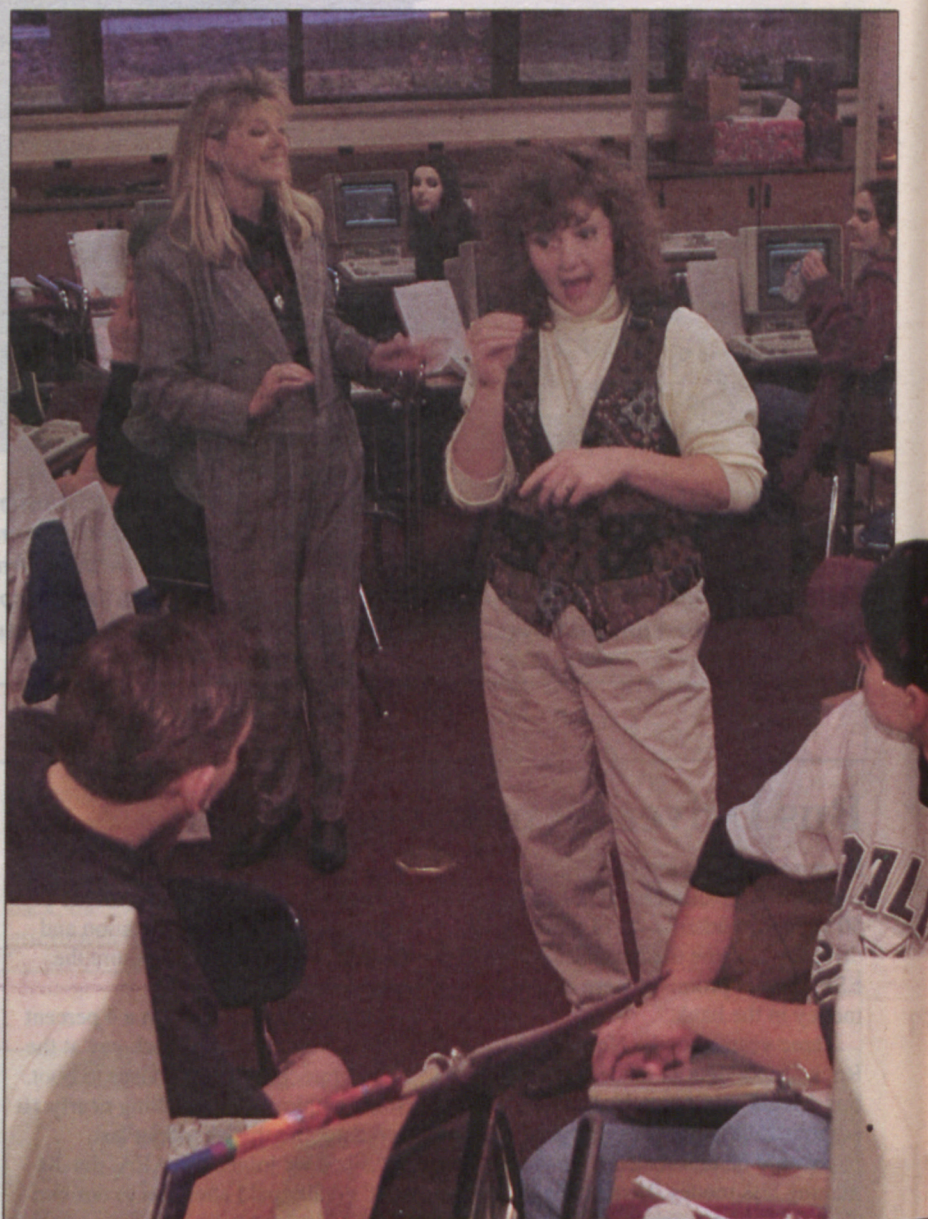
Yes. If a student with a disability has behavioral problems that are so disruptive in a regular classroom that the education of other students is significantly impaired, the needs of the disabled student cannot be met in that environment. If the IEP team determines that even with the provision of supplementary aids and services, that student's IEP could not be implemented satisfactorily in the regular educational environment, the placement would not be the LRE placement for that student at that particular time.

What students does IDEA cover?

States receiving IDEA funds must make a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to all children with 13 specified physical, mental, emotional, or sensory impairments***. There may [also] be students who do not have one of the 13 disabilities recognized by IDEA, but who qualify for regular or special education and related services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, [which] defines disability in terms of a substantial limitation of a major life activity, e.g., learning. An example [would be certain] students with attention deficit disorder.

An IEP is not required under Section 504. However, implementation of an IEP developed in accordance with IDEA is one means of satisfying the FAPE requirements of Section 504.

Can a teacher get a placement decision reviewed?



Teacher Julie Drennon talks to her keyboarding class at North Thurston High School in Lacey, Washington, while interpreter Lisa Flatt signs for three deaf students.

Under IDEA, each student's placement must be reviewed at least annually. If a teacher/educator wishes to initiate review of the student's IEP at a point during the school year that does not correspond with the annual IEP review, that individual can request the district to hold another IEP meeting.

What factors must be considered in determining appropriate placement?

The overriding rule in placements is that the individualized program of instruction and related services reflected in each student's IEP is the basis for the placement decision.

The relevant factors are: the educational benefit to the disabled student of regular [versus] special education; the benefit from interacting with nondis-

abled students; the degree [to which the placement would] disrupt the education of other students, [making it impossible] to meet the unique needs of the disabled student.

If students with disabilities are placed in the regular classroom based on impermissible factors, such as the category of disability, the availability of educational or related services, space availability, or administrative convenience—rather than on the basis of [their] IEPs—such placements would violate federal law.

Who must be on the IEP team? Regular educators? Paraprofessionals?

Required participants include the child's teacher [usually the special education teacher], a [district] representative, the parents, the child, and other individuals at the parents' or [district's] discretion.

Generally, there is no requirement for related services personnel, paraprofessionals, or regular educators to attend IEP meetings, but such individ-

IN THE CLASSROOM

uals may be invited at the discretion of the parents or [school district].

However, if a disabled student is either placed or being considered for placement in a regular classroom, the school district should exercise its option of inviting more than one teacher to attend the IEP meeting, and authorize the student's regular teacher as well as the student's special education teacher to attend.

How can a teacher be sure an IEP meets student needs?

If a teacher [member of a] student's IEP team believes that particular services are appropriate for that student, the teacher should recommend those services during the IEP meeting—which includes the child's parents—for consideration. Once the IEP team makes a decision as to the instruction and services that student needs, the district must implement [it].

Does an educator have a right to file a minority report?

There is no provision in federal law for educators to file a minority report about educational decisions with which they disagree. Under IDEA, parents and [district officials] have the right to initiate an impartial due process hearing on [placement and other specified] decisions resulting from IEP meetings.

Can IDEA funds be used for professional development? Release time? An aide?

[The determination] must be made on a case-by-case basis. In general, these expenditures could be permissible expenditures of IDEA funds if the school district determines that they would be necessary for students to

Interpreter Debbie Tygart signs to three deaf students. In background teacher Sherrie Smith helps other students in her world cultures class at North Thurston.



Photographs by Ellen Barner

receive a FAPE or, if all eligible children are receiving a FAPE, to meet other requirements of IDEA. The expenditures must be included in the school district's IDEA application.

What policies does federal law allow pertaining to students with disabilities whose conduct is a serious problem?

Generally, student discipline is a state and local matter. However, when students with disabilities are involved, IDEA and Section 504 are applicable. [Both say] school districts may not remove students with disabilities from school for more than 10 school days for misconduct growing out of their disability. (Under IDEA and Section

504, removal of a student from school for more than 10 school days constitutes a change in placement, which cannot be implemented without first determining whether the misconduct is related to the student's disability.)

If the misconduct is determined to be related to the student's disability, IDEA and Section 504 require that the parents be given written notice of the proposal to change the student's placement and informed that they have the right to request a due process hearing. If the parents request the hearing under IDEA, the "stay-put" provision requires that the student remain in the then current educational placement [until final resolution of the matter] unless the parents and school district agree on an interim placement.

If the misconduct is determined to be unrelated to the disability, the student may be subject to long-term suspension or expulsion. Section 504 permits districts to discontinue educational services for such students on the same basis as for nondisabled students. However, IDEA requires that educational services continue—in an alternative setting, if necessary].

Special education assistant Sandy Buddle repeats teacher Julie Drennon's instructions for North Thurston senior Steven Welch in a computer applications class.

A school district may also seek a court order to remove a dangerous student if the school district believes that maintaining that student in the current educational placement is substantially likely to result in injury to that student or to others. ■

* For a complete copy of the Department of Education response, go to NEA Online (Teaching & Learning/School Climate Library) or write the NEA National Center for Innovation, Dept. RH, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

**Individualized Education Plan, the written program of specialized instruction and related services developed by the IEP team for each child with a disability.

***Mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities.

Making Inclusion Work

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is up for reauthorization this year. Among the NEA's goals for improving it: more federal funding and modification of the "stay-put" rule to increase school authority over placement of disabled students who are violent or disruptive.

State and local Associations have begun to make sure that members get the training, time, and staff support they need for inclusion to work.

Last year, Washington state's North Thurston Education Association (whose members were photographed for this article) bargained a revolutionary contract provision that requires an outside review committee to visit the district to evaluate its handling of all at-risk students. Included on the committee: NEA UniServ staff from other districts.



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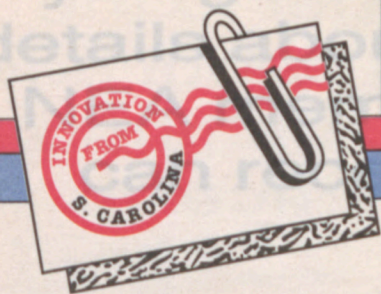
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Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work



From left: Principal Geri Martin, administrative assistant Gail McElmoyle, and gifted and talented teacher Lynn Nolan are keys to Brushy Creek's emergence as a high-tech, high quality school.

Photographs by David Crosby

Starting from Scratch

How one South Carolina elementary school went from run-of-the-mill to state-of-the-art.

Brushy Creek Elementary was at a crossroads 10 years ago. To reduce Brushy Creek's bulging 700-student population, the school board had redrawn enrollment boundaries. Under the new plan, several hundred Brushy Creek students would attend a brand new school, while just over 300 students would remain at Brushy Creek.

The choice for Brushy Creek educators—stay the course, giving kids a solid education the way they had for years, or try an innovative, possibly even risky, educational course, built on a new model.

Geri Martin, Brushy Creek's new principal, and the school's staff opted for the latter. New boundaries to them meant new opportunities to better meet the needs of all Brushy Creek students.

It all added up to a new approach. "We wanted our teachers to change from being dispensers of information to being facilitators for student learning," explains Martin.

"At the same time, we felt our school needed to bring in technology and integrate it into the classroom, because students were going to be using new technology tools in the real world."

The rest, as they say, is history. Today Brushy Creek is an educational innovator, thriving, not just surviving.

Instead of looking back, Brushy Creek staff look "Forward to the Future" (the name of their program). "We recognize that you can't reach all students and teach them one way," explains NEA member Lynn Nolan, a gifted and talented teacher. "Through technology, we're trying to reach all types of learners."

"Using technology this way has helped us create a new learning environment," adds Martin, an NEA member. "What it's eliminated are mindless kill and drill, endless workbook assignments, and having kids sit in desks in neat rows."

The school's technology heart consists of more than 180 computers networked into an elaborate system that utilizes a wide range of electronic gear—hand-held scanners, CD-ROM drives, video cameras, and music and speech synthesizers.

Students sitting in their classrooms in the main building or in any one of the 18 portables (school population has burgeoned yet again) can access information from the school's library. Using telecommunications via modem, teachers and students have gone online to communicate with people in 55 countries.

To master it all, teachers became spe-

cialists in specific areas—such as telecommunications or word processing, then shared their expertise with others.

To buy it all, school staff added ingenuity to dozens of grant applications. They received funding from the state and several foundations—most recently, NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

NFIE awarded Brushy Creek one of its Learning Tomorrow grants that helped pay for staff to attend technology seminars in Atlanta, Nashville, and Washington. Staff enthusiasm for the bold technological breakthrough is matched by a growing local and regional reputation for excellence.

Brushy Creek's enrollment continues to grow each year. Today, it's not unusual for parents in other neighborhoods

to request special permission for their children to attend Brushy Creek.

Others in the area call Brushy Creek a showcase for the South.

Students are paying attention to the changes—and loving them.

Children do class projects on computers instead of posterboard. On field trips, kids can take pictures, load them into the computer system, then generate a video to play for their parents.

Third-grader Michael Brinn, 9, says he likes the new way better than the old. Ten-year-old Christopher Garrick agrees. "I'd rather write a story on computer than sit down with a piece of paper," says Garrick, a fifth-grader who's been using computers for two years. Last year, Garrick says he was thrilled when his class tapped into a computer in Sydney, Australia.

"If they get nothing else out of it, I'd hope children would have some idea of the exciting things computers can do in their lives," says technical assistant Gail McElmoyle.

"Computers are not just for Nintendo. They can open a whole new world."

"The technology gives us flexibility," Nolan adds. "Now our biggest challenge is keeping ahead of the kids."

Want to reach Brushy Creek? They're on the NET, Internet that is, the worldwide computer network, at LynnNolan@BBS>SERVEORG.

—Cindy West

Using grant money and their own ingenuity, Brushy Creek staff offer students the very latest electronic communications equipment—and plenty of it. The school's student-to-computer ratio is 4 to 1.



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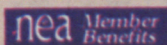
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1-800-637-4636.

Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn



Peggy Clarke is president of the American Social Health Association (ASHA), an 80-year-old agency dedicated to stopping sexually transmitted diseases. ASHA operates hot-lines, sponsors support groups, funds research, and draws attention and resources to what Clarke calls "this somewhat unpopular issue." Clarke spoke recently with NEA Today staff writer Victoria Lytle.

Are we talking about an epidemic here?

Yes—in fact, we're talking about more than one. There are about 12 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases diagnosed each year in this country. And there are a number of sexually transmitted diseases that are spreading at alarming rates.

Chlamydia, for example, affects four million new people every year. Chlamydia is a bacterial infection that, if detected, can be treated and eliminated. When untreated, it's the single greatest cause of infertility in this country.

We have a resurgence of syphilis in some communities, and as a result, we also have a resurgence of congenital syphilis. And we're seeing some strains of penicillin-resistant gonorrhea.

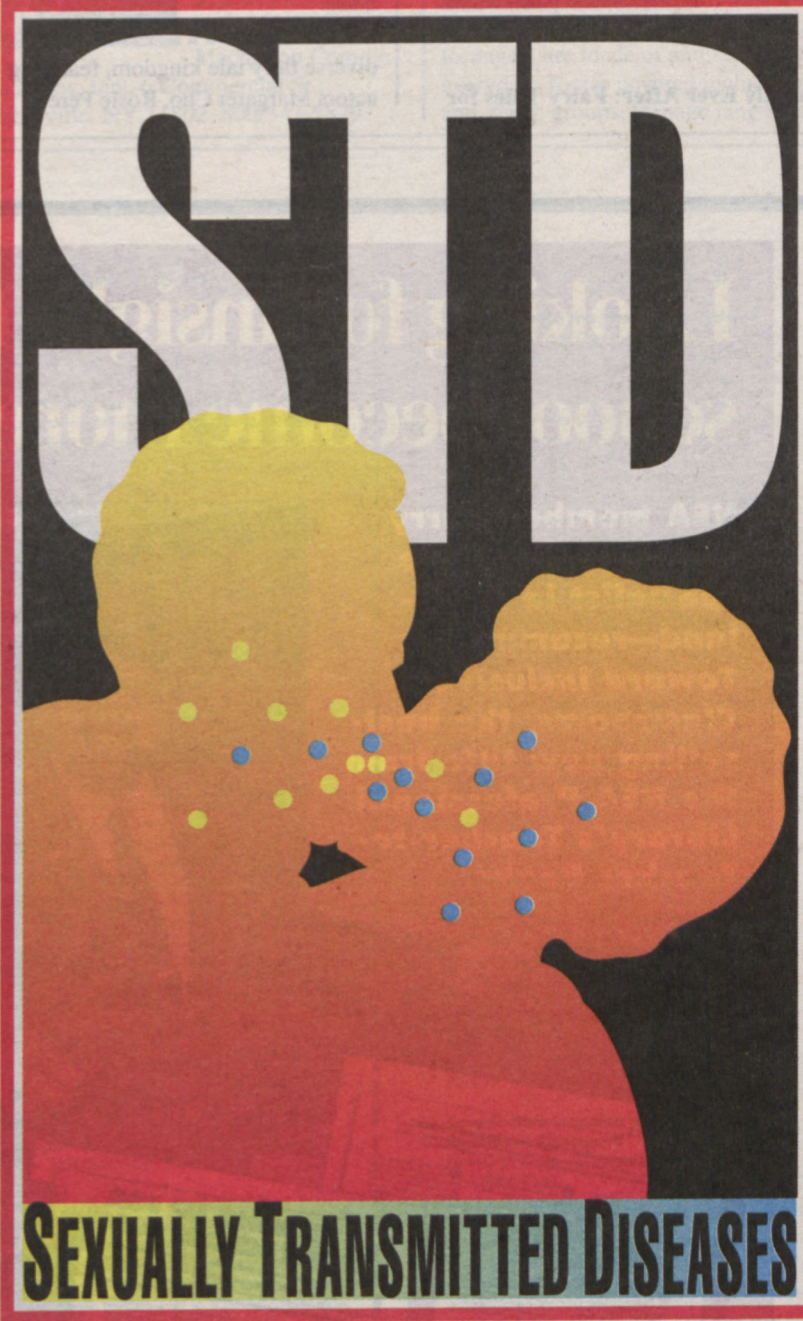
What about viruses?

Over 40 million Americans have genital herpes infections. About half a million new people every year acquire the disease. There may be as many as 40 million Americans who have the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), some types of which cause genital warts. And HPV in some cases, has been linked to cervical cancer. There are 40,000 new cases of HIV and AIDS each year in this country. These are viral infections that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Those who have any of these sexually transmitted diseases, even if they don't know they have it, are at risk of transmitting it to others.

What's the biggest obstacle to the prevention of STDs in this country?

I think it's lack of political will. We should acknowledge that these epidemics are part of our culture, and that we can and must do something about them. Whether we like it or not, young people are being sexually active at earlier ages—without the knowledge, preparation, and skills to protect themselves. The major obstacle to prevention is our own willingness to be ignorant of the



tremendous implications of these diseases.

Why are people so willing to look the other way?

Let's face it, nobody wants to talk about STDs. It's uncomfortable. It makes people embarrassed, makes them feel awkward. But we have to put aside our embarrassment because focusing on these diseases today will protect against greater infection tomorrow.

We have to help people protect their own health and their partner's. And we have to make sure we have the social and medical resources to get people who need help screened, treated, cured, and counseled to protect against any subsequent infection.

And we don't, in our culture, have these resources. We don't have the

health and education systems that other industrialized countries have.

So we are actually behind, say, European countries?

Yes. The United States, unlike all other industrialized countries, has a more significant and growing problem with all sexually transmitted diseases. Our health care system and how we care for poor people is part of it.

But we must also look at the way we, as a culture, deny the reality of these infections. We withhold information from people. We do a lot of things in our culture with sexual images. We sell cars, perfume, jeans—using images of sex. What we don't do is sell and promote sexual health.

Are far right attacks on sex educa-

tion part of the problem?

Yes. People who have rejected the idea of communicating about sexual health and sexual activity are misinformed about the importance of good sex education. Ignoring the issue and eliminating programs are shortsighted and can promote disease and loss of life.

We must set aside embarrassment and fear that just by talking about these issues that somehow we're going to encourage them, and we must recognize that these epidemics can be prevented.

The loss of health and loss of life and the emotional as well as physical problems of having sexually-transmitted diseases can be reduced by more active education.

When are children ready to learn about sexuality?

When it comes to sexuality, the best and first educator for children is a parent. And parents can talk to children as early as preschool about things their kids are curious about—toilet training, for instance, is an opportunity to talk about children's bodies.

There's good research that suggests that if parents are open and honest about personal issues and about explaining their own values, they'll subsequently be able to help children in making safe choices and delaying the onset of intercourse.

What can school employees do to help control the STD epidemic?

School employees can make sure, when there's an opportunity for young people to get information about STDs, that they're getting accurate and balanced messages. Kids need their questions answered clearly and they need to be routed to the kind of support systems and programs that will truly help. (See resources, below.)

Resources

The American Social Health Association (ASHA) operates several national toll-free telephone hot-line services:

► National AIDS Hotline, 800/342-AIDS; Spanish-language service, 800/344-7432; TTY services for the deaf, 800/243-7889. Ask about scheduling a speaker-phone call for all your students.

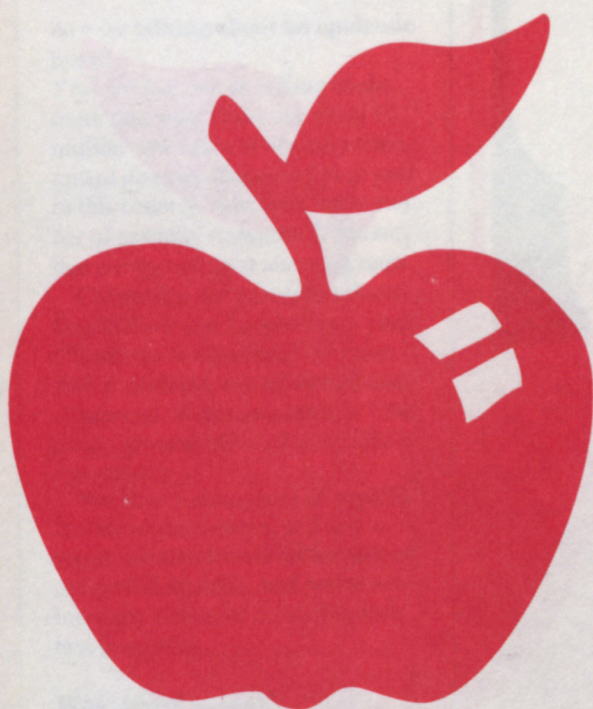
► National STD Hotline, 800/227-8922.

► National Herpes Hotline, 919/361-8488.

► ASHA also publishes a series of pamphlets on sexually transmitted diseases, including one designated for teens. For ordering information, call 919/361-8400.

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RESOURCES

TV Tips

The Brain: Our Universe Within—*The Discovery Channel, Thursday, March 6, 9-10 a.m. ET.* This episode takes an intricate look at the brain and its amazing capacity for regrowth.



Goals 2000 Satellite Town Meeting: Providing Our Children with a Disciplined and Drug-free Learning Environment—*The Discovery Channel, Thursday, March 10 9-10 a.m. ET.* This special town meeting features educators, parents, students, and policy leaders talking about solutions to the problem of school violence.

Scott Ross: Violence in America—*The Family Channel, Thursday, March 10, 4-5 a.m. ET.* Ross examines the increasing incidence of violence against women and violence in school. The Family Channel offers taping rights for one year.

Diamonds in the Snow—*PBS, Wednesday, March 22, 8-10 p.m. ET.* Thousands of young Jewish children lived in

the Polish city of Bendzin before World



War II; barely a dozen survived the Nazi Holocaust. Through interviews and rare archival film and photos, this documentary tells the story of three of the survivors.

Mustang: The Hidden Kingdom—*The Learning Channel, Tuesday, March 28, check local listings for time.* TLC Elementary School visits a remote region in Tibet, isolated from the outside

world for the last 30 years.

Discovering Women—*PBS, Wednesday, March 29, 9-10 p.m. ET.* This six-part series profiling the lives of prominent women scientists begins with a look at physicist Melissa Franklin and her search for the smallest particles in the universe.

Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales for

Every Child—*HBO, check local listings for dates, times.*

HBO has created a new, ethnically diverse fairy tale kingdom, featuring actors Margaret Cho, Rosie Perez,



Sinbad, and Buffy Sainte-Marie in such stories as Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, and Snow White. Actor Robert Guillaume narrates this series. For more about the shows, "meet" Robert Guillaume on page 7 of this issue.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a computerized clearinghouse for children's television and radio in Washington, D.C.

Looking for insight to help your school become more inclusive?

NEA member Harry Klugel—a resource specialist in Maryland—recommends *Toward Inclusive Classrooms*, the best-selling new title from the NEA Professional Library's Teacher-to-Teacher Books.



"Nearly every page in this book gave me a useful inclusion idea. It's not a 'know-it-all' approach. All NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books are written by teachers for teachers, so you get practitioner insights and experiences—not theory, reality!"



■ "Need a quick way to find practical information to help you cope with state-mandated inclusion? Start with this book. The reproducibles, sample assessment forms, and glossary will help you communicate effectively with parents. In my school we've also adapted the forms to help keep our team on track."

■ "*Toward Inclusive Classrooms* has a really great concept: teachers teaming up to provide the degree of inclusion appropriate to their circumstances, while focusing on what a student can do rather than what he or she can't do. Here we teach kids how to be advocates for themselves. It's great when they know they can go to the teacher and discuss accommodations that allow them to do their best.

—Harry Klugel

Toward Inclusive Classrooms

NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
96pp. 1994. (2903-8-00-U3)
Price: \$9.95

RELATED TITLES

- Creating Schools for All Our Students: What 12 Schools Have to Say
 - Children with Exceptional Needs in Regular Classrooms
 - Teaching the Academically Diverse Classroom (A Teacher TV video)
- (Descriptions and prices on facing page.)

Teacher TV

Here's the schedule for *Teacher TV*, the award-winning weekly magazine-style program coproduced by NEA and The Learning Channel. *Teacher TV* airs Sundays at 12:30 p.m. ET.

March 5: Teaching In and Through the Arts

March 12: School-to-Work Transition

March 19: Student Self-Esteem

March 26: Parent Involvement

April 2: The Inclusion Dilemma

RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Big Biography. J.C. Reed. This 14" x 20" big book highlights the life and times of Dr. King, with text, large b/w photos, and excerpts from King's speeches. The book's print



is large enough for kids in K-4 grades to see. Includes teaching guide. The back cover has a timeline of important dates from the King era. \$14.95 plus s&h. Contact Newbridge Macmillan Communications, Inc., 6 Commercial St., Hicksville, NY 11802, 800/347-7829.

PARENTING



Teenspeak! A Bewildered Parent's Guide to Teenagers. Linda Meyer.

A guide explaining the stuff that teenagers are made of and faced with everyday. Topics covered include music and music groups, teenage language,

video games, dating, and the new gun and drug cultures. Includes a list of other parenting resources and some helpful hints. \$8.95 plus \$4.75 s&h. Peterson's Guides, Inc. P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08543-2123, 800/338-3282.



Summer Opportunities for Kids and Teenagers, '95. Peterson's Guides. What will the kids do this summer? This 1995 easy-to-use guide to summer camps and programs includes more than

1,400 opportunities for kids and teenagers to learn, earn, and journey. Each listing has relevant dates, costs, contacts, and details. \$21.95 plus \$6.75 s&h. Peterson's Guides, Inc. P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, NJ 08543-2123, 800/338-3282.

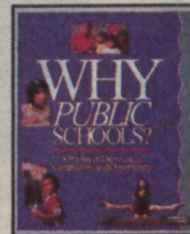
DRAMA

Famous Americans: 22 Short Plays for the Classroom. Liza Schafer, editor. Kids like the theater, and they'll enjoy the dramatic approach to learning about a few great Americans.



The plays about Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Cesar Chavez, and Amelia Earhart are designed to give as many 4-8 grade readers as possible a part they can call their own. A teaching guide with extended activities follows each play. 194 pp. \$16.95 plus \$2.25 s&h. Scholastic Professional Books, P.O. Box 7502, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 800/325-6149.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



Why Public Schools? Need a resource for promoting the importance of public education in your community? Tucked away in the February

NEA Today was a special four-color pamphlet. We have extras! Copies can be obtained by calling 800/229-4200 and giving the stock #6416-X-10-AP. For \$35 get a box of 250.

GOVERNMENT

Social Security Kit. Social Security Administration. This kit addresses the major questions young people have about Social Security: Why do I have to pay Social Security taxes? Will Social Security be there when I need it? How do I make the program work for me? Includes a teacher's guide, video, five lesson plans, with fact sheets and handouts. To order, write Social Security Teacher's Kit, Social Security Administration, Office of Public Affairs, P.O. Box 17743, Baltimore, MD 21235.

Toward Inclusive Classrooms has been enthusiastically praised by inclusion-minded professionals like Harry Klugel. But no matter what professional development challenges you face, we guarantee (or your money back) you'll find practical classroom (and school-wide) strategies and techniques in these NEA Professional Library books and videos:

NEW! Creating Schools for All Our Students: What 12 Schools Have to Say
Captured in these pages are the real-life experiences of school-based inclusion teams. Topic covered include: how two schools began to use an inclusive approach, collaboration, collegiality, and partnership, improved learning through innovative instruction, leadership in an inclusive school, and how we can all work together to create more inclusive schools. 76pp. 1994. (1865-6-00-U3) **Special Member's Price: \$13.00**

NEW! The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)
by Karen A. Bosch and Katharine C. Kersey
"My copy is thoroughly dog-eared!" says Melissa Earnest, a beginning social studies teacher from Caldwell County Middle School, Princeton, KY. Along with a day-by-day preparation schedule, you'll find 1001 hints and ideas on, classroom arrangement, discipline /reward strategies, parent communication openers, and examples and reproducible. All of these ideas come from experienced colleagues who are sharing their wisdom with anyone — new or experienced — who wants to stand on their shoulders. 144pp. 1994. (1862-1-00-U3) Price: \$18.95

NEW! Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms
Merrill Harmin
This is the premiere title in the Inspired Classroom Series. These practical strategies will expand your classroom management skills and help inspire student self-discipline through personal responsibility. 128pp. 1995. (2950-X-00-U3) Price: \$12.95

NEW! Becoming a Reflective Teacher
Leonard Kochendörfer
As you use this unique workbook to explore the collaborative process of becoming a reflective teacher, you will discover new ways to: deepen your insight about yourself as a professional, think systematically about your teaching practice, expand your repertoire of skills and techniques, and work with your colleagues to improve your school's learning environment. 144pp. 1994. (3352-3-00-U3) Price: \$16.95

NEW! Shared Decision-Making
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode 38
Visits two communities that fundamentally involve parents, teachers, school board members, administrators, AND students in all levels of decision-making. Both sites report that they have improved the quality of education. 22 min. (7787-3-00-U3) Price: \$15.95

School-Based Change
NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
What these teachers have learned is that school change is a complex, continuing, and—yes!—rewarding process. You'll find tips, tricks, and techniques for coping with: group decision-making,

ing, time constraints, OBE, and innovation in the face of resistance. 96pp. 1994. (2905-4-00-U3) Price: \$9.95

Student Portfolios
NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
Eight teachers discuss how they use portfolios to enhance learning in elementary and secondary classrooms. Learn from their classroom experiences how you can use portfolios to: collect and assess student work in a meaningful, hassle-free manner, help students assess their own progress, report student progress to parents, build school credibility and accountability in the community. 96 pp. 1993. (2901-1-00-U3) Price: \$9.95

Alternative Assessment
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #11
This video looks at using computer technology to allow students to document their own accomplishments; students judging one another's science fair projects; and students demonstrating achievements and setting goals at regular parent-teacher-student conferences. 22 min. (7760-1-00-U3) Price: \$15.95

Innovative Discipline
NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
If you are interested in developing innovative, child-centered, strategies that foster self-control and a positive learning environment, don't miss these K-12 approaches: TQM (total quality management) comes to school, peer mediation, "kids court, heart-to-heart discussion groups, strategies for developing self-discipline and self-esteem. 96pp. 1994. (2904-6-00-U3) Price: \$9.95

Time Strategies
NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books
Find out how these busy teachers secure time for effective teaching and learning, professional development, and school-change efforts. Their stories reveal: how to match time to curriculum, effects of school scheduling, block scheduling strategies, and collaborative scheduling ideas. 96pp. (2902-X-00-U3) Price: \$9.95

Time: Restructuring the School Day
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #14
How do you get more time for what's important? Consider: one teacher's time-efficient hints; a school that uses block scheduling; and a school that turns time matters over to a participatory management team. 22 min. (7763-6-00-U3) Price: \$15.95

Children with Exceptional Needs in Regular Classrooms
Libby G. Cohen, Editor
We recommend this book for a broad perspective on the emerging trends and preferred practices for teaching exceptional students in regular classrooms. Includes discussion questions. 184pp. 1992. (3009-5-00-U3) Price: \$11.95

Teaching the Academically Diverse Classroom
Teacher TV on VHS, Episode #22
Four schools share approaches for working with diverse student populations. One school makes moderately and severely disabled students an integral part of the school community, while another analyzes the work and learning styles of its students and staff to best match and accommodate their needs. 22 min. (7771-7-00-U3) Price: \$15.95

At-Risk, Low-Achieving Students in the Classroom
Judy Brown Lehr and Hazel Wiggins Harris
When some of the over 100 practical ideas from this book were used by a South Carolina elementary school, student test scores showed remarkable improvement. Read it and learn how to get

the most out of your students (and yourself). 104pp. 1988. (3338-8-00-U3) Price: \$9.95

Countdown to the First Day of School
Leo M. Schell and Paul Burden
Here's a comprehensive, get-ready checklist that can help anyone—from beginning K-8 teacher to shrewd veteran—who wants to be better prepared for the new school year. Countdown's unique, compact, and user-friendly format contains a surprising number (over 1,100) classroom tested tips. It covers everything from getting acquainted with other school staff to designing an inviting classroom to developing lesson plans. 56pp. 1992. (2150-9-00-U3) Price: \$4.95

Strategies for Learning and Remembering: Study Skills Across the Curriculum
Mary Ann Raloff, Linda Leal, and Leonard Defabo
Your students need effective study skills to succeed. The best single-volume resource on this subject, *Strategies...* will help you teach early childhood, elementary, middle school, and secondary students the most effective ways to learn and remember. 112pp. 1993. (3048-6-00-U3) Price: \$14.95

Cooperative Learning in the Elementary Classroom
Lawrence Lyman, Harvey Foyle, and Tara Azwell
Use cooperative learning to build social skills and teach conflict management, enliven drill and practice sessions, and integrate the curriculum. In addition this book demonstrates the importance of cooperative learning's links to whole language, critical thinking, portfolio assessment, and classroom diversity. 160pp. 1993. (3042-7-00-U3) Price: \$14.95

Cooperative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom
Harvey C. Foyle, Lawrence Lyman, and Sandra Alexander Thies
The success-proven, practical strategies and techniques you find in these pages will have immediate impact on your thinking, planning, and learning outcomes. Group building, nurturing self-esteem, social skills, communicating effectively, cooperation and play, and decision-making are emphasized. 128pp. 1991. (0361-6-00-U3) Price: \$11.95

Cooperative Learning in Middle-Level Schools
Jerry Rottier and Beverly J. Ogan
You'll master the cooperative learning concept as well as techniques involving individual accountability, group accountability, social skills accountability and many others. You'll receive several sample lesson plans, staff-development workshop material, and a project-planning form. 112pp. 1991. (3068-0-20-U3) Price: \$11.95

Learning Centers for Child-Centered Classrooms
Janice Pattillo and Elizabeth Vaughan
Filled with illustrations and complete sample plans for pre-primary and primary learning activities, this book is a popular treasure trove of ideas. 176pp. 1992. (0357-8-00-U3) Price: \$15.95

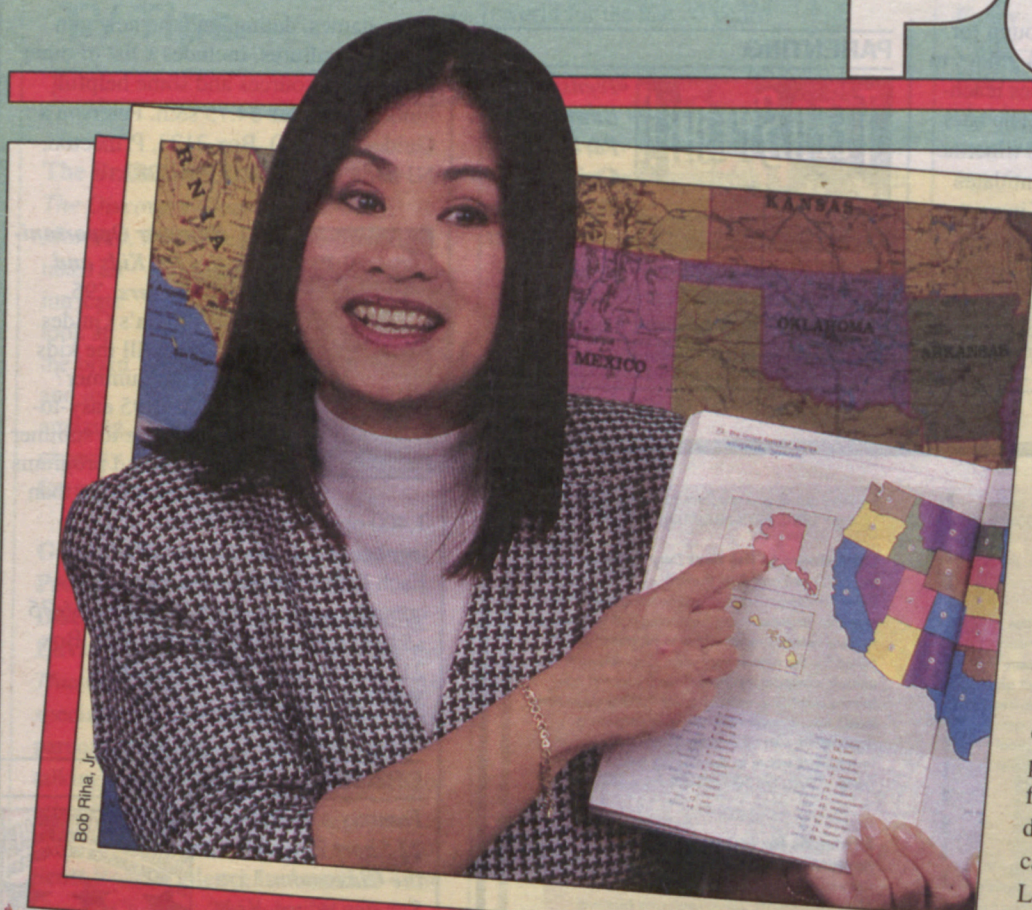
Teachers as Agents of Change: A New Look at School Improvement
Allan A. Glatthorn
This "teacher-friendly" handbook uses research to show how you can take the lead in restructuring classroom instruction, school culture and climate, home-school relationships, and collegial relationships. 208pp. 1992. (1853-2-00-U3) Price: \$16.95

ORDER TOLL-FREE 1-800-229-4200

or mail to: NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516

(shipping and handling charges will be added to all orders. Include CA or DC tax if applicable.)

People



Bob Riha, Jr.

Helping New Arrivals

Disney American Teacher of the Year **Huong Tran Nguyen** described her ride high atop a horse in the Disney World Christmas parade as "exciting." That word—and more—is exactly how many folks would describe Nguyen's experiences over the past 24 years: Coming to this country as an exchange student, gaining refugee status after the communists took over her native Vietnam, and working hard to achieve success both as a teacher and as a creator of programs for children who are not native English speakers. Nguyen, an ESL teacher at Long Beach Polytechnic High School in California, sees herself as a role model for language-minority students who, she says, have been socialized to think that they can only get minimum-wage jobs.

An outspoken opponent of California's Proposition 187—which would call upon teachers to report suspected undocumented aliens and deny them a public education—Nguyen says she can understand why people might vote for this proposition. But, she adds, the bottom line is, "These students deserve a chance at a future. So many of them are so bright, so talented, so caring. Many of them graduate from high school with a 4.0 grade average. Let's give them a chance to shine."

The Dance Of Life



Photographs by Tom Emrich

In some communities, electives like dance are regarded as frills.

Not so at Vermont's rural North Country Union High, where a lack of cultural opportunities prompted parents and students to lobby the school board to make **Cheri Skurdall's** dance classes a vital part of the curriculum.

Some 110 North Country Union students now get instruction in modern ballet and jazz dancing. Her students study dance technique, history, and composition. After school, 16 students perform in her extracurricular dance company. And Skurdall is even planning to add a dance class especially for male athletes.

"Dance teaches higher level thinking skills like memory and translation," explains Skurdall, Vermont's 1994 Teacher of the Year. "And it teaches students to show up on time, appreciate quality, follow through, and get the job done."



John Ballance

Homespun Smithsonian

When **Kevin Brooks** wants to teach his kindergarten students about human bones or microscopic life, he takes them to the museum—the one that's built right on the campus of White Hills Elementary in Baker, Louisiana.

Brooks founded White Hills' hands-on "museum" two years ago with a mounted goat's head donated to the school and a few knick-knacks he found in closets and storage rooms.

The museum—once just unused storage space—now houses rare rock samples, a projection microscope, and a real human skeleton.

Area teachers assign their students science, math, and writing projects based on the museum's collection. "Not only do the kids enjoy it, but it makes teaching fun," says Brooks, a member of the East Baton Rouge Parish Association of Educators.

If you want to treat your kids to a museum of their own, Brooks says it's easy. "All you need to start a museum is a way to display the exhibits," Brooks says. "You don't need to be elaborate."

And don't worry about what to display, Brooks says. "Teachers always have lots of packed-up stuff that makes for great exhibits."



Teamwork On and Off the Court

Teaching or coaching, Association members **Brad Smith** and **Carl Tinsley** of Oregon City, Oregon, High School are a great combination.

For the past 17 years, the pair has team-taught four history classes and co-coached the school's girls' basketball team, recently rated among the top five in the country by *USA Today*. (In the photo above, Tinsley and team members jokingly trying to toss Smith into the river.)

Currently the defending 4-A state champion, the team has a five-year record of 97 wins and 13 losses. This year's team is 13 and 1.

How has a team from a town of only 15,000 achieved such success? "First, the self-fulfillment prophecy: I expect success so the kids reach success," explains Smith. "Second, we're willing to take a chance and play in out-of-state tournaments. Third, consistency: Carl and I have been with the team many years."

As the team dribbles its way across the country, players get an education on and off the court, combining games with visits to historical sites. Team members earn money for travel by running an annual basketball tournament in Oregon City. They also conduct summer basketball camps for community kids.

Most team members excel off the court, too. The team has a combined grade point average of 3.7. Over the years, 22 of the girls have won college scholarships to NCAA Division I schools.



Techno Teaching

Virginia high school teacher **Judy Miller** doesn't teach geography, but that didn't keep her from receiving a statewide award for excellence in teaching the subject.

Miller's secret: technology. A history teacher at Park View High School in Sterling, Miller embellishes her teaching the multimedia way, with laserdiscs, videos, computers, photo CD's and GTV, an integrated system from the National Geographic Society.

"Whether it's creating videos for mock presidential elections, 'excursions' into other countries to understand their history and culture, or searching national databases for little-known facts, my class lives and breathes technology and sees the geographic side of every political and historical event," Miller explains.

This year, Miller's students "followed" the Lewis and Clark expedition, identifying landmarks and barriers along the way and recreating a Civil War battle on video.

"You've got to capture the attention of the MTV generation," Miller says. "But it's not all bells and whistles for entertainment's sake. There are intricate lessons embedded in multimedia presentations. My students are catching on, and we're all having fun."



Some school kids are packing more than lunches.

Each school day, 40 teachers and 2,000 students are attacked. On an average school day, 150,000 children will miss school for fear of being hurt. Each year, 3 million crimes are committed at or near schools.

Last year, the NEA led the way in working to keep our nation's schools safe. NEA helped to pass the Brady Bill, which now restricts the sale of handguns and bans military-style assault weapons. In 1990, we led the successful effort to pass the Gun Free School Zones Act, making it illegal to possess a weapon within 1000 feet of school property. And, we were instrumental in getting new resources to develop and expand school safety programs.

In 1994, we helped pass new laws that will provide up to \$7 billion to support school safety, youth employment and anti-gang efforts.

As the political arm of the NEA, NEA-PAC works to protect these programs and expand efforts to keep our schools safe places to teach and learn by helping to elect public officials who understand our needs. But without your help, there is no way NEA-PAC can succeed.

To meet the challenge of the new political environment, NEA-PAC must raise its level of contributions. If you have contributed to NEA-PAC, please consider an increase. If you are not supporting NEA-PAC, please consider doing so today.

Without the political work of NEA-PAC, the NEA cannot be a strong voice in Congress. Without your help, NEA-PAC cannot meet the challenge ahead.

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Federal law requires political committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer for each individual whose contributions aggregate in excess of \$200 in a calendar year.

Federal law prohibits NEA-PAC from receiving donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families. All donations from persons other than members of NEA and its affiliates, and their immediate families, will be returned forthwith.

If you wish to contribute to NEA-PAC, please write the amount of your contribution in the space provided. If you are interested in contributing through payroll deduction, please contact your State Association President, or call 1-800-893-0396.

INTERNATIONAL

RIGHTS WATCH

Using strong-arm tactics, governments in three countries are preventing thousands of education employees from organizing into unions. The Education International, representing NEA and dozens of other groups that together represent nearly 20 million education employees, has stepped in to protest.

KOREA

Korean law forbids teachers to form trade unions, but that hasn't stopped Korean teachers from forming a union known as CHUNKYOJO. Now the government is cracking down on the teachers group. So far, government officials have discharged more than 1,600 teachers who joined.

The Education International (EI) has filed a formal complaint with the International Labor Organization (ILO), which recommended that Korean laws be revised to comply with internationally accepted labor standards and that the discharged teachers be reinstated without conditions.

The government insists it will reinstate only those who sign a document saying they've dropped union membership and will not join again. EI has suggested that the ILO send an investigative team to Korea to review the continued repression of union members and leaders.

KENYA

For the past two years, academic staffers at the five state universities of Kenya have been on strike, seeking only government recognition of their union, the Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU). In an effort to break the strike, the universities fired union leaders. Efforts to challenge the dismissals in court have been denied.

Stepping in once again, EI has filed a complaint with the ILO, asking for recognition of the union and reinstatement of the leaders who have been dismissed.

PERU

The Peruvian government has denied bargaining rights to SUTEP, an EI affiliate that represents nearly 260,000 education employees there.

The Peruvian government, ironically, has ratified all relevant conventions of the ILO, which bring with them the requirement to bargain with SUTEP. EI has filed a complaint.

In a related matter, the Peruvian government has refused to grant a license to Nicolas Olmedo Auris Melgar to act as a union representative for SUTEP, a license previously granted in 1989.

A guest at NEA's 1994 Representative Assembly in New Orleans, Melgar is SUTEP's international secretary and a member of EI's Executive Board. EI has filed a second ILO complaint in this matter.

Summertime and the Living's Not Easy

Every summer for the last five, NEA member Toby Rogers has driven to Central America on a mission to do what he can for the poor.

Most teachers try to get away from it all in the summer, preferring to fill at least some of their hours with family activities, fun, rest, and relaxation.

For art teacher Toby Rogers of Knoxville, Tennessee, the rest and relaxation must wait. Once he's finished teaching students at Homestead, Pineview, and Crab Orchard Elementaries, he'll hit the road. Again this year, as he has for the past five, Rogers will head to Central America on a relief mission.

"It's not easy going into these areas," says Rogers, president of the Cumberland County Education Association. "I've been held at gun point. I've been lost at night for hours. I've gone 17 days and showered just four times. But I go. I have to. These people are in need."

Rogers was pulled to the region after overhearing a conversation about the plight of

Nicaraguan children at the 1989 NEA Representative Assembly in Washington, D.C. He was particularly stunned to hear comments about their lack of basic educational materials. In horror and disbelief, Rogers went to Nicaragua to see for himself.

What he found was more than he bargained for.

"I found the Nicaraguans plagued with many problems, many deficiencies, and many misconceptions," explains Rogers. "But I also found people with a strong sense of survival who wanted help out of their chaos."

Overwhelmed by their desire for life, Rogers dove in to help. With assistance from the Tennessee Education Association, NEA, and donations from individuals, groups,

corporations, and the children at the three elementary schools where he teaches, Rogers started making deliveries.

Rogers doesn't take frivolous things to the Nicaraguans. One year it was a pick-up truck, another year a refrigerated truck. He's taken buses, school supplies, and medical supplies.

"They're so appreciative," he says, "and the response is always so positive—claps, cheers, yells, and words of thanks."

"The refrigerated truck that we took down in 1994 is used

to transport everything from children to produce," notes Rogers.

Access to the vehicle enabled Nicaraguans to start mini-industries marketing produce.

In June, Rogers will take a Mazda sedan to the people of the Iglesia

Bautista Emmanuel (Emanuel Baptist Church) in El Salvador. They need transportation to continue their resistance against

the death squads and to continue their efforts to educate the children, he says.



Nicaraguan children pose in front of the bus filled with medical supplies NEA member Toby Rogers delivered to them. Inset: Rogers and his wife Judy, who chairs the Tennessee Education Association's Human Relations Committee.

"I have a lot of respect for these educators. They've gone through hardships," Rogers notes, "but they still maintain their professional attitudes and a mission for those they educate."

"We need to realize that empowered children can be raised up out of their economic difficulties," he says.

Finally, Rogers says the road he drives is two-way.

"The aid I give to the Central Americans empowers me. I get revitalized with each trip I make," Rogers says. "And because of these trips, I am a better teacher."

—Cara Elmore

Toby Rogers would like some help with his next trip to El Salvador—two people to help drive the car would be great, he says. If you'd like to join him on an education adventure, contact Rogers at 9704 Tay Circle, Knoxville, TN 37922, phone and FAX 615/693-3631.

ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

A Time for Reflection

Flashback—either in your memory or in your imagination—to 50 years ago.

It is 1945, the culmination of what has been termed "The Decade that Changed the World." It is a year that would forever alter the social, economic, and political life of this nation and the world.

In 1945, World War II ended. The global conflict's toll: 53.5 million deaths, 25 million wounded, \$1.6 trillion spent. In Europe, the concentration camps were liberated, too late for the six million victims of the Holocaust.

At home, the nation rejoiced, the soldiers returned, the gates of the Japanese-American internment camps were closed.

In 1945, 50 nations signed the Charter of the United

Nations, framing an organization for international cooperation unprecedented in human history.

In 1945, scientific and technological advances launched the nuclear age and the space age and delivered the miracles of penicillin and other medicines.

Peace-time innovations of war technologies quickly produced the computer, radar, and television. War-time measures produced daylight savings time, recycling, even radial tires.

In this 50th anniversary year, we'll commemorate these milestones. Today's echoes of the past—regional armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, religious and racial discrimination and hatred—will be impossible to avoid.

Fifty years later, in 1995, it's appropriate that we Americans—in our homes, classrooms, and communities—recall the history, relearn its lessons, and renew promises for a brighter future.



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TRENDS

Who's Hot, Who's Not

Teachers may get no respect in the classroom, but kids tell phone pollsters that teachers play a critical role in society. And, teachers rank just below parents as kids' favored role models.

Below: the percentage of kids who said these groups were "very important" to a good society:

Schoolteachers	86%
Scientists	76
Business owners and managers	44
Politicians	43
Writers, artists, and poets	37
Journalists	37
Professional athletes	27
Moviemakers	16
Rock musicians	10

Source: The Gallup Organization conducted the *National Youth Survey: Attitudes Regarding Society, Education, and Adulthood* for Junior Achievement. The survey polled 630 students, aged 10-17.

Degrees of Literacy



Some college graduates possess literacy levels that are "less than impressive," "mediocre," or "near alarming," according to a recent report from the Educational Testing Service.

The top 25 percent of adults with only a high school education outscored the bottom 25 percent of those with a college degree in prose literacy. And only 11 percent of four-year graduates and four percent of two-year graduates attained ETS's highest mark, which deems them qualified for tasks like summarizing lawyers' challenges to prospective jurors.

College graduates on the whole are more literate than those with little or no college education. Also, the more literate the graduate, the higher earnings tend to be.

Yet the authors note that the spectrum of ability is wide, and they say that more study is needed to maximize the effectiveness of college in producing critically thinking adults.

For more information, contact ETS Information Services, Princeton, NJ 08541, 609/734-5050.

Donations, Inc.

Corporations continue to pour some important dollars into the nation's public schools, but the pace of contributions has slowed a bit in recent years.

According to the Council for Aid to Education, corporations gave \$2.5 billion to education in 1993, up just slightly from \$2.4 billion in 1992.

Of that total, about 70 percent went to

higher education institutions, and about 15 percent to K-12 schools. In 1983, only five percent of corporate donations went to K-12 schools.

Donations to all levels of education from corporations, foundations, individuals, and bequests totaled about \$15 billion in 1993.

For more information, contact the Council for Aid to Education, 342 Madison Ave., Suite 1532, New York, NY 10173, 212/661-5800.

Working 9 to 5

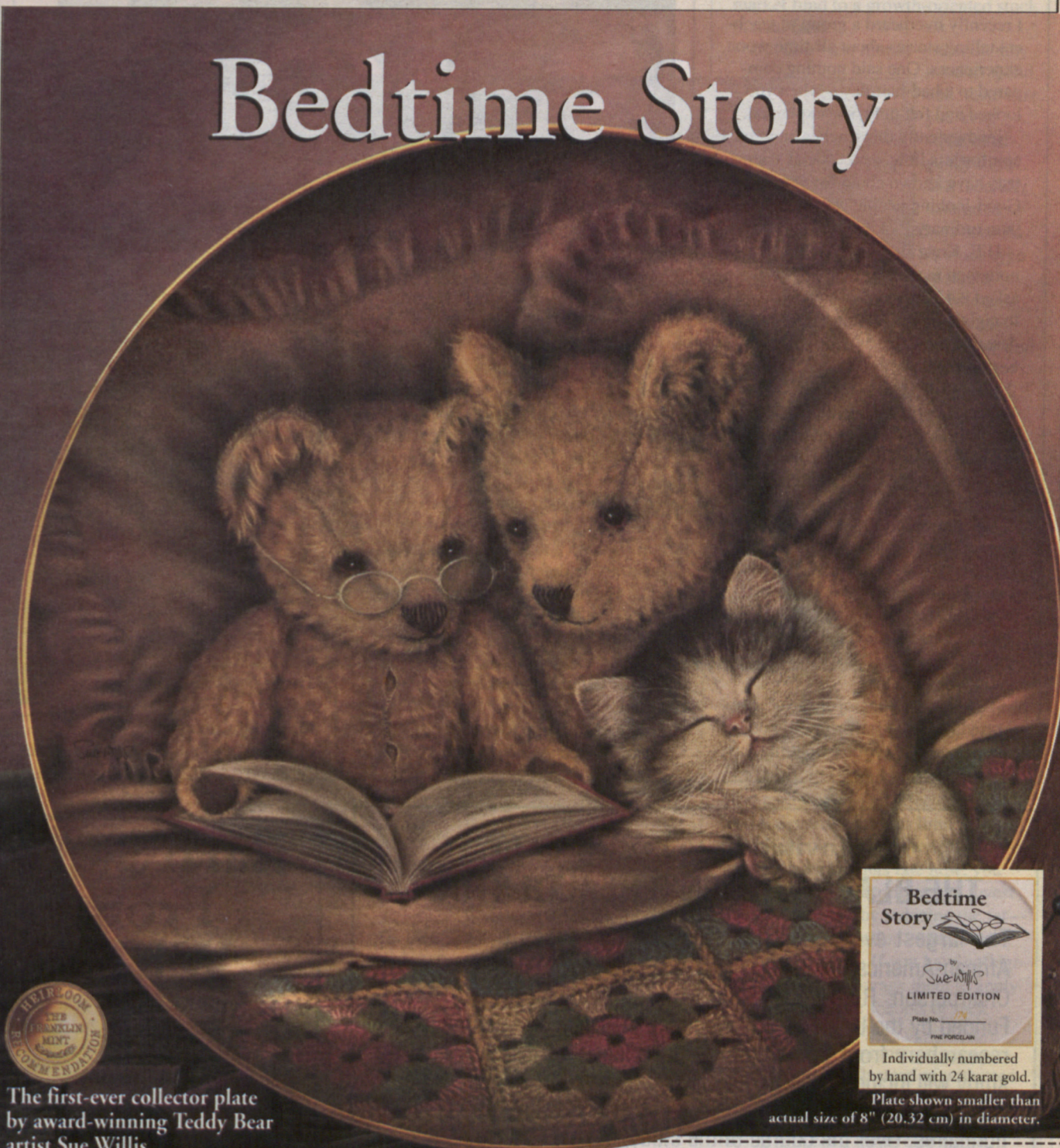
According to a *USA Today* analysis of 1990 Census data, 79.3 percent of Sioux Falls, South Dakota mothers of children under six work outside the home—compared to 51 percent in New York City, and 59.7 percent nationwide.

In fact, mothers in metropolitan mid-western cities are far more likely to hold outside jobs than moms in other parts of the country. In Lincoln, Nebraska and

Bismarck, North Dakota, for example, 74.7 percent of women combine careers with parenthood.

Why? "People will say it's economic necessity, but I think it goes a lot deeper than that," Linda Laskowski, US West Communications vice president for South Dakota, told *USA Today*. "Women [here] grew up watching their mothers work on family farms, believing it's okay for women to be equal partners."

Bedtime Story



The first-ever collector plate by award-winning Teddy Bear artist Sue Willis.

Teddy Bears and kittens...two of the world's most sought-after collectibles. Individually, they represent cuddly charm and furry affection. Together, they are absolutely irresistible!

Now award-winning Teddy Bear artist Sue Willis creates a portrait of sheer delight in her first-ever collector plate, "Bedtime Story." It's an enchanting scene of comfort and love as a pair of Teddy Bears snuggle up under the covers with their sleeping kitten and a favorite storybook.

In the tradition of the most prized collectibles, this heirloom collector plate is crafted of fine porcelain and lavished with breathtaking color. It is hand-numbered and bordered in 24 karat gold. And each imported plate bears the artist's signature mark on its reverse side. Priced at just \$29.95, this Limited Edition will be closed forever after just 45 firing days. Available exclusively from The Franklin Mint, Franklin Center, PA 19091-0001.



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RESEARCH CLUES

Are Looks Everything?

Old research points to physical attractiveness as key to teachers' effectiveness. Believe it?

I recently overheard a group of teachers telling stories about all-time worst experiences. One said nothing compared to a bad-hair day—when you looked and felt ugly, she explained.

Inadvertently this teacher hit upon a comfortless little secret social scientists have known about for years: Good-looking people get more breaks than ordinary looking people do.

H.E. Kratz first revealed this phenomenon in education in 1896. He asked 2,411 students from the second to eighth grades in Sioux City, Iowa to describe the characteristics of their best teachers.

Some 87 percent of those young Iowans mentioned "helpfulness" as the most important teacher characteristic, but a whopping 58 percent mentioned "personal appearance" as the next most influential factor.

Students today would never say teachers had to be neat, well dressed, or attractive to be deemed effective—or so I thought until last November when ABC's 20/20 aired "The Ugly Truth." This startling half-hour program demonstrated just how important good looks can be.

A series of "sting operations" engineered by 20/20 staff showed good-looking men and women getting the



job offers, while those judged less attractive got the brush off. The physically attractive woman who ran out of gas had offers of help standing in line, while the less attractive woman got tired feet waiting for help.

Those judged better looking raised more money for charity than the less attractive. In a mock trial, the physically attractive defendant was less likely to be convicted and got a lighter sentence than the less attractive one. Jurors judged the good-looking guy as "intelligent," and "nice," even though neither defendant spoke.

In Union City, New Jersey, 20/20 staff used makeup to exaggerate differences between women teachers. First

graders were asked who was the better teacher A—the more attractive one—or B. Students said A was nicer. They wanted A as a substitute, because they thought she was smarter



and easier to talk to.

"Do you like having a pretty teacher?" asked narrator John Stossel.

"Yes," responded one child. "If they're pretty you know they're smart."

Tom Cash, a psychologist from Old Dominion University who served as a consultant on the 20/20 program, said there was no pretense about making the exercises "scientific." But the program did institute some simple controls like reversing the order of the teachers' presentations to

different groups of students, and having students indicate preferences before group discussions.

"Lookism is real." You can learn more about it by reading *Physical Appearance and Gender* (1992) by Linda Jackson and *The Social Psychology of Facial Appearance* (1988) by Bull and Rumsey.

Robert McNergney is professor of education at the University of Virginia. His address is 276 Ruffner Hall, UVA,

Charlottesville, VA 22903.

An Invitation To Participate In THE BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH STUDY

The largest ever long-term study of the causes of disease in African-American women is just beginning. N.E.A. Black Caucus Chairperson, Ruth Cage, serves on the study's Advisory Board. Funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and conducted by researchers from Boston University and Howard University, the study will include over 50,000 black women. Participants will provide information on health history and habits through mail questionnaires. Over the course of the study, the occurrence of illnesses will be determined through follow-up questionnaires mailed to participants every two years. The study will provide much-needed information on conditions that have a major impact on the health of black women, including stroke, heart disease, breast cancer and lupus.

If you wish to enroll in this important public health research study, please write by March 31, 1995 for a questionnaire to:

Black Women's Health Study
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LOOKING AHEAD TO RETIREMENT

Planning for retirement used to be relatively simple: You relied on your pension, Social Security benefits (if you paid into the system), and personal savings to provide a comfortable retirement.

But that was before employers, including state and local governments, started downsizing, turning many older employees into retirees before their pensions matured.

And that was before employers started shifting away from traditional defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans that require employees to make their own retirement investment decisions.

So, if you're planning to retire in the next decade, you've got to confront some key questions now: Will you need supplemental income during retirement? If so, how much? And how will you generate that income?

To answer these questions, first decide how well you want to live during retirement. If you intend to move into a smaller, less expensive home, you may be able to cut costs. But if you want to travel, you probably can't.

Either way, plan on medical bills that are likely to increase as you get older, and for paying more from out of one's pocket for insurance, including Medicare premiums. Your coverage may be less comprehensive than your current policy.

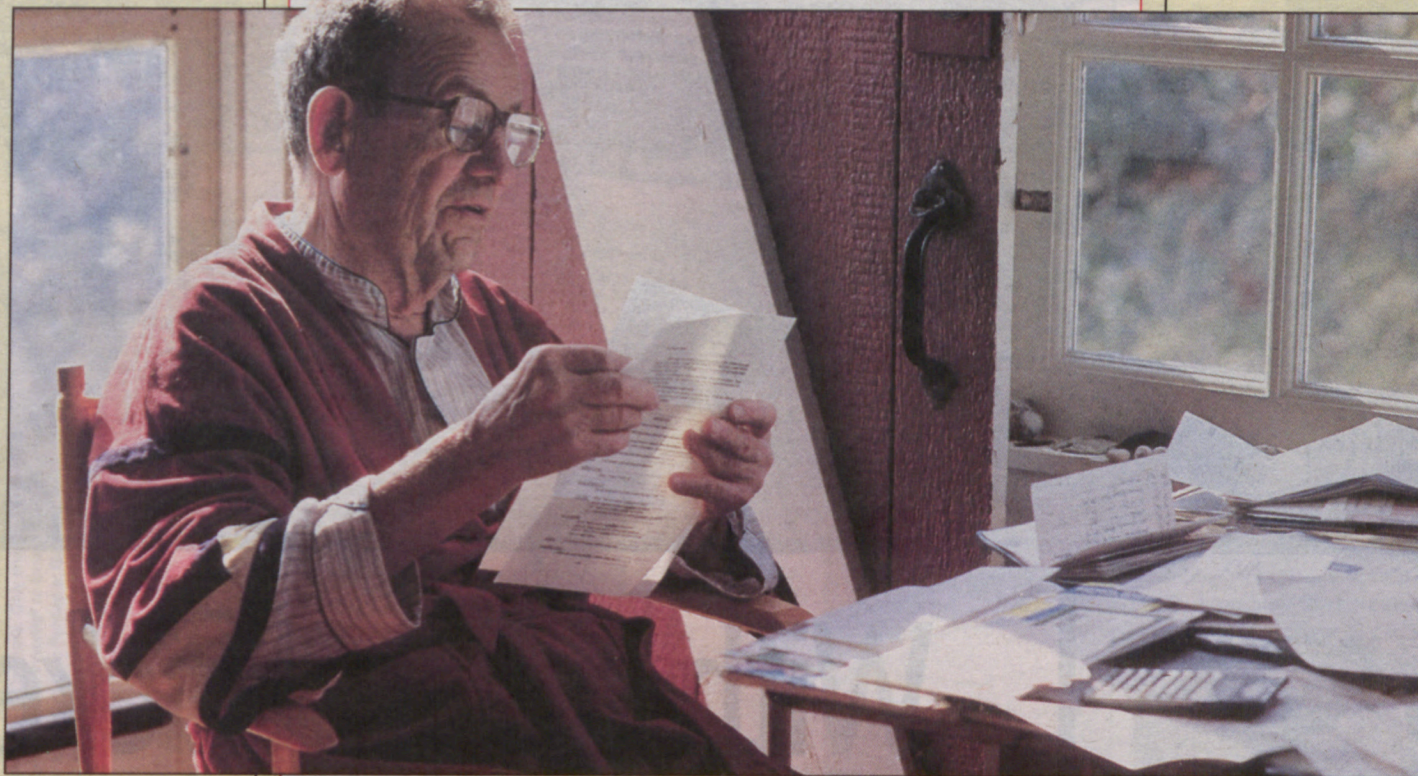
If you want to maintain your pre-retirement lifestyle, "assume you'll spend the same amount you're spending now," says the Wisconsin Education Association Council's Bob Moeller, who conducts retirement planning seminars. "That means your income should equal 100 percent of what you currently spend. If that's not possible, the bottom line is 80 percent."

Once you've decided how well you want to live, the next step is to get an idea of where you stand financially. To do this, make a list of your anticipated expenses during retirement, including mortgage payments, car loans, and credit card balances.

Then make a list of your assets (bank savings accounts, stocks and bonds, etc.) and regular sources of retirement income, such as your pension and Social Security.

"Figuring out how much you spend and where you spend it can be a real

FINANCING YOUR RETIREMENT



Unlike previous generations, today's retirees are in the driver's seat when it comes to retirement planning.

eye opener," notes Moeller. "If you discover that you're going to need supplemental retirement income, the next step is to worry about where you're going to get it."

You've got several options.

➤ *Your home could be a good source of retirement income.* If you don't mind moving, you can trade down (sell your larger or more expensive house, buy a cheaper one, and invest what's left) or sell and rent a cheaper home.

If you decide to sell, you may qualify for the \$125,000 exclusion, a one-time tax break that allows seniors to exclude from taxable income up to \$125,000 of profit from the sale of a home.

To qualify, you or your spouse must be at least 55 years old, and you must have owned and lived in the house for at least three of the five years preceding the sale.

If you don't want to move but can't afford to stay in your current home,

you have two options. One is a reverse mortgage, a type of home equity loan for people who own their homes outright. You take out a home equity loan at a certain rate and in return receive a monthly check for a specified amount.

The other option is a sale-lease-back—you sell your home to an investor and lease it back.

➤ *You can make the most of tax-deferred savings.* The more money you shelter from taxation now, the more you'll have working for you and the more you'll have later on.

There are several ways you can shelter income. One is to open an individual retirement account (IRA) to shelter income-producing investments.

A better option for public school employees is to purchase a tax-deferred annuity or 403 (b) plan. With this type of annuity, you invest your pre-tax dollars to give you a steady income after you retire or later. You pay taxes on the investment only when the money is removed either when you

retire or if you leave your job.

NEA Member Benefits offers such a plan through its NEA Valuebuilder Annuity Program. For more information, contact Member Benefits at 800/637-4636.

➤ *You can examine your investment strategy.* If you have substantial savings earning low interest, you might want to consider assuming more risk with a small portion. For example, you could shift some money from a money market fund to a growth-oriented stock mutual fund.

But don't use money you soon may need to spend, and make sure you keep some emergency funds in a federally insured savings account or some type of liquid investment.

➤ *You can work now and into retirement.* If you haven't yet retired, working a second job now could generate additional income. One option is seasonal, part-time work. You might also consider working during retire-

ment, perhaps by turning a hobby into a moneymaker. Before you do, call the Social Security Administration (800/SSA-1213) and find out how your earnings will be affected by the Social Security earnings limit.

➤ *You can reduce expenditures.* To increase your savings rate now, you must cut back on expenses and invest the savings. Start by reducing the fat—restaurant and vacation expenditures, clothing costs, etc. If you have college-age children, encourage them to apply to lower-cost state schools or seek non-need scholarships.

Also, cut back on interest expenses by paying in cash instead of with credit, and by getting rid of credit cards with high interest rates and annual fees. If you can't avoid credit card debt, at least use lower-rate cards, such as the NEA School Days or Premier Gold MasterCard cards.

➤ *You can get professional advice.* Many retirees seek the help of a financial planner. You'll get the most objective advice from a fee-only planner.

A variety of member benefits are available to NEA-R members through NEA-Retired and NEA Member Benefits. For more information on NEA Member Benefits programs, call toll-free 800/637-4636.

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*Available. Excludes other GM vehicles. [†]R.L. Polk & Co., Leading Mini-Van Sales Analysis of Repeat Ownership, 6/94.



SOUNDING BOARD

By Benjamin Lev

When I was a youngster, I watched thousands of hours of cartoons and sitcoms and commercials, which all blend together into one memory with a few distinct characteristics.

I usually watched by myself, or at least I was in my own world while watching. I ate non-stop while I watched. I "surfed" between shows until my mother got mad at me for not coming upstairs for dinner. And, when I finally turned the TV off, I felt bad about myself and what seemed like my insignificant life.

While I was watching, I had to be ever-alert for my dad's footsteps. My father was a man of action, with his own profession, hobbies, sports, and perpetual projects. He loathed the passivity that TV wrought upon his children. He gently rocked our heads between his large hands, made sloshing sounds, and claimed that television would surely "jellyfy our brains."

Several times, he broke the set or cut off the plug, which left our house TV-free until my brother would fix it (he's now an electrical engineer). Needless to say, I took to watching when Dad wasn't around or wouldn't find out.

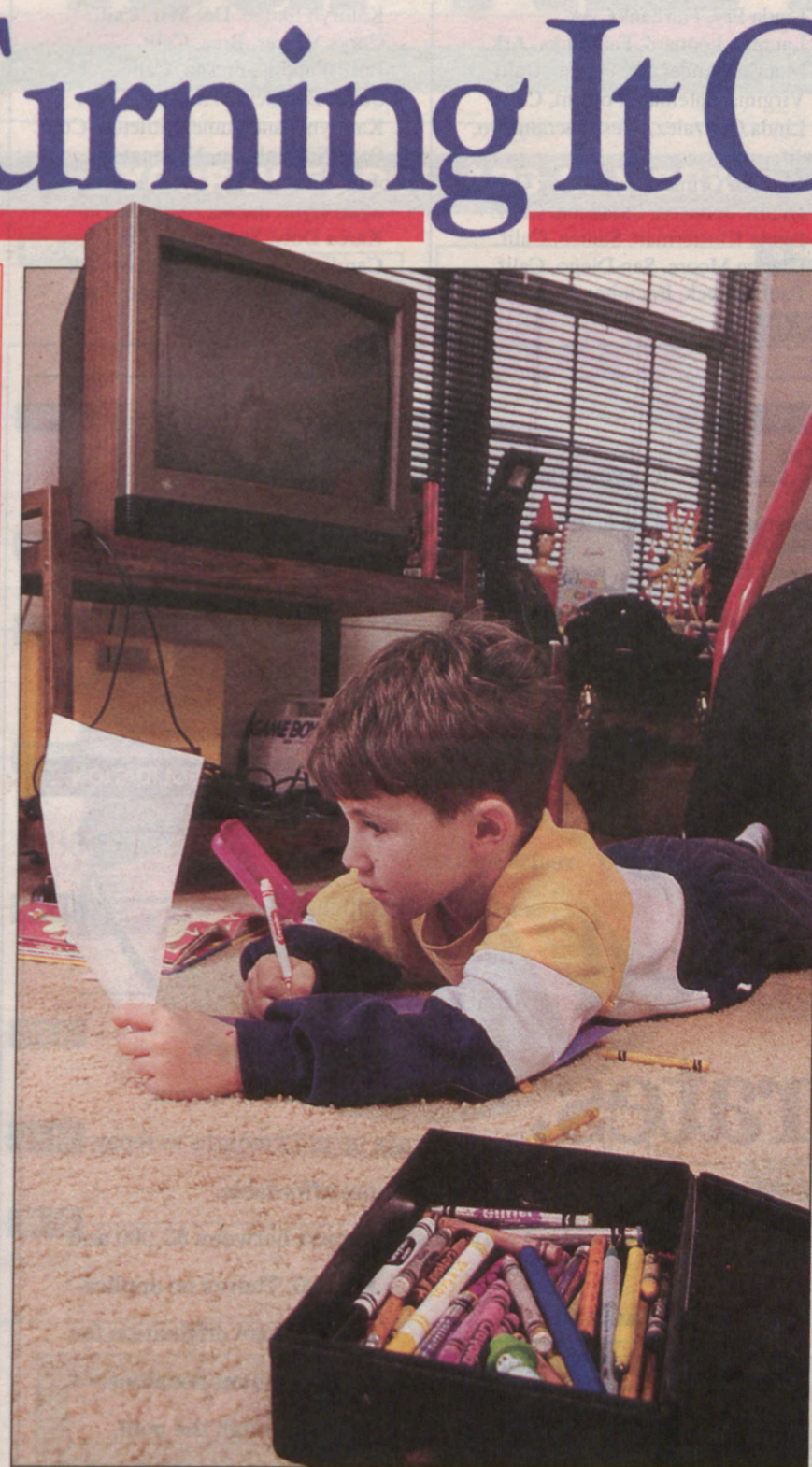
In all, I probably watched as much television as my friends. But as I grew, I remembered his critique of excessive viewing, vacuous shows, and passivity in general.

When I first became a teacher, I worked hard to help my students enjoy learning and get along with one another, yet often I felt like I was swimming against the tide. It took the advent of the Ninja Turtles—and the immediate increase in playground injuries as kids imitated the reptilian martial arts—for me to consider television as a root source of children's social problems.

If children learn more from what they're shown than what they're told, how could television *not* have a tremendous impact on their behavior? Could it really affect their academics as well? What were kids learning during their (average) four hours of daily viewing? Would cartoons, especially shows like "The Simpsons" and "Beavis and Butthead," reinforce the notion that dumb is cool?

Jane Healy's book *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think & What We Can Do About It* (Touchstone Books, 1991) helped me understand how TV and its "culture" affect growing brains. Simply, the brain, like muscle, can be developed, especially during the critical growing years between birth and age six.

Mental stimulation—new experiences, reading, conversation, exploration, physical effort, sensory stimulation, and play—all cause the young brain's nerve cells to send out new dendritic branches, resulting in a more



Ever feel like pulling the plug, throwing out your TV Guide, and finding something else to do? A California teacher explains how he got thousands of TV-loving kids and their families to turn off and take control of their time.

"plastic," more capable, brain.

Television, for a variety of reasons, is not as mentally stimulating as these activities, and thus doesn't cause as much dendritic branching. Chronically unstimulated brains are less well-developed, less flexible. The classic "television zombie" look on our children's faces intuitively confirms this.

Once the formative years are over, it's much harder to develop the brain. Maybe my father, in his own way, was right about us jellyfying our brains if we watched too much television.

Too much television. Six times more TV than homework. An average of

5,000 hours by the time a student enters kindergarten. By the time young people finish high school, they'll have spent more time watching TV than sitting in a classroom.

Yes, too much TV is a central part of the problem. If moderation makes sense, I wondered, how could I help to bring it about?

As I saw it, families were so chronically enmeshed in their daily viewing routine that they didn't—couldn't—see its effects. They needed a chance to take a reasonable break from the set, say a week or two. They

needed support from other families, planned alternatives for the children and themselves, and skills to manage their return to viewing.

I organized the first Sonoma County TV Turn-Off campaign

in 1992 with the simple goal of helping families and individuals rethink the role of television in their lives. The Turn-Off involved 12 schools with a total of about 2,000 students. It was so well received that each year we've doubled our participation. In March 1994, 45 schools with about 10,000 students joined in the fun.

It's taken a lot of work on the part of many parents and teachers to organize activities for the youngsters in lieu of cartoons, but it's been worth it.

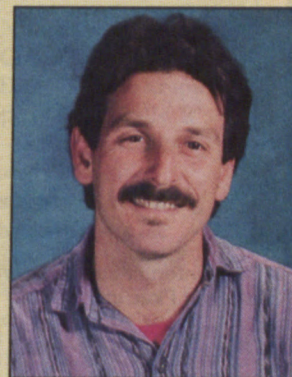
Countless children have proudly told me about all the things they're doing instead of watching television, even long after the official turn-off ended. They're planning for their viewing and watching less in general. They're savvy about commercials, plots, fact versus fantasy.

The children are clearly in charge of their TV viewing, instead of the other way around. Our next task is to find out how the parents are doing!

Turning off the TV is a simple, sensible act with the potential to improve family life in dramatic ways. Maybe you, your family, and your entire school will join us in April for a week without television. It would make my father proud.

FYI: The first annual national TV Turn-Off is set for April 24-30. For information about organizing a local turn-off in your school, library, or community, contact TV-Free America, 1322 18th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/887-0436, FAX 202/887-0438. For a \$5 donation, TV-Free America will send you an organizer's kit, complete with guidebook, poster, bumper stickers, pledge cards, and an information package.

Benjamin Lev teaches 30 bilingual kindergartners at Rose-land Elementary in Santa Rosa, California.



He's also a home/school resource teacher and member of the Santa Rosa Education Association. He quit medical school 10 years ago to teach. Instead of watching television, Lev tends a large garden, plays jazz guitar, and is inventing a new language with his wife.

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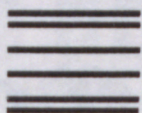
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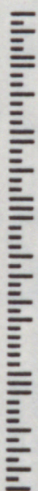
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SHORT TAKES

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Paul Robeck, Encinitas, Calif.

Kathryn Skube, Del Mar, Calif.
Chrys Verner, Brea, Calif.
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The UniServ Staffing Program provides financial support to every state affiliate to advance the program of direct staff services to local Associations and members for enhancement of collective bargaining, professional skills, help in crises, and day-to-day supervision of rights and benefits.

General Field Assistance to help local and state affiliates in achieving improved compensation, and in member representation, organizational development, crisis resolution, and maintenance of membership.

Direct Participation in Collective Bargaining and improving compensation with a special emphasis on health care issues.

Legislative and Political Activities to influence all levels of policy makers including legislation to increase funds for education, the right to bargain, and improved portable retirement plans.

Training of Elected Leaders and Staff in skills basic to protecting members' rights and building members' power. Thousands receive this support each year as they learn to negotiate, process grievances, and perform other functions of importance to members.

External Public Relations and Internal Communications to enhance the image of public education as well as regular internal reports to members, leaders, and affiliates through printed and electronic media.

Legal Defense at various levels involving the protection and enforcement of rights of members (includes \$1,000,000 of employment liability insurance protection for each member).

Development of an Assertive Urban Plan to tackle the problems facing urban educators and students in our communities and schools.

Strengthen the Effectiveness of Locals and expand and improve the Association's capacity to effectively represent all categories of education employees.

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Contingency to meet emergencies and unforeseen crises at national, state and local levels.

National Foundation for the Improvement of Education for the Endowment fund and administration of the program.

Business and Finance Services to conduct the business affairs of the Association (\$3.84) and provide funding for the mortgage repayment of the NEA headquarters building (\$3.36).

Organizational Maintenance Costs for administration and building upkeep.

Data Processing Capabilities to provide necessary data to support all Association activities.

Governance Costs for the Representative Assembly, Board of Directors, Executive Committee, standing committees, and other costs of member involvement in policy development, service, and benefit programs.

Improvement of Teaching and Learning to advance new innovative concepts and methods in teaching and learning which can improve the job performance of members and the quality of public schools; and develop experimental programs relating to school restructuring and education reform in general.

Advocate Research to maintain computerized banks of educational, financial, and socioeconomic data to meet affiliates' needs in more effectively responding to the interests of members in such areas as instruction, negotiations, and legislative activity.

Human and Civil Rights Advocacy and Awareness programs to promote equity, to advance freedom of inquiry in education, to protect the job rights of education employees, to further the organizational leadership role of minorities and women, and to protect the Association from attack.

IN THE NEWS

On the Highway

A new \$3 million program—funded by Microsoft founder Bill Gates and run by NEA's non-profit foundation, the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education—will bring the Information Superhighway to more than 10,000 American students.

Gates will donate proceeds from an upcoming book to the Road Ahead Program, which will provide grants and technical assistance to teacher-led teams using information technologies in innovative ways in their communities.

For more information, contact NFIE, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7840.

WORKING FOR YOU

A Matter of Policy

Should NEA boycott Stimson Lane wines? The question is just one of dozens that come across Carolyn Cruise's desk every year.

From inclusion to affirmative action to year-round school, Cruise—as manager of NEA's office of governance and policy support—helps NEA leaders make informed decisions on key issues.

Cruise's year both starts and ends at NEA's annual Representative Assembly, where she's busy onstage, helping to present issues to delegates, answer questions on NEA policy, and make sure things run smoothly.

Once the RA is over, Cruise follows up on issues raised there. Last year, for instance, delegates in New Orleans voted to research food product boycotts supported by the United Farm Workers. Back in Washington, she did some digging and wrote a report that was presented to the NEA Board of Directors in October.



Carolyn Salisbury

"I found out that the grapes are sprayed with pesticides that make the fruit dangerous to farm workers and consumers," Cruise says. NEA's Board voted to boycott the wine.

When it comes to explaining NEA policy to members and the public, Cruise and NEA Assistant Executive Director Irma Kramer are the ones who respond to the calls. It's a constant challenge—and Cruise's 24 years of experience really pay off.

"It's not just a question of memorizing the NEA bylaws. What matters is the application of the bylaws over a period of time," Cruise explains.

With the help of the bylaws, the Landrum Griffin Act, *Robert's Rules of Order*, and her memory, Cruise deftly

negotiates the maze of policy questions that come up.

But, clearly, the aspect of the job Cruise relishes is working with NEA leaders. "I like to feel that I'm giving NEA leaders the support and assistance they need to get the job done," Cruise says. "The better informed they are, the better I feel."

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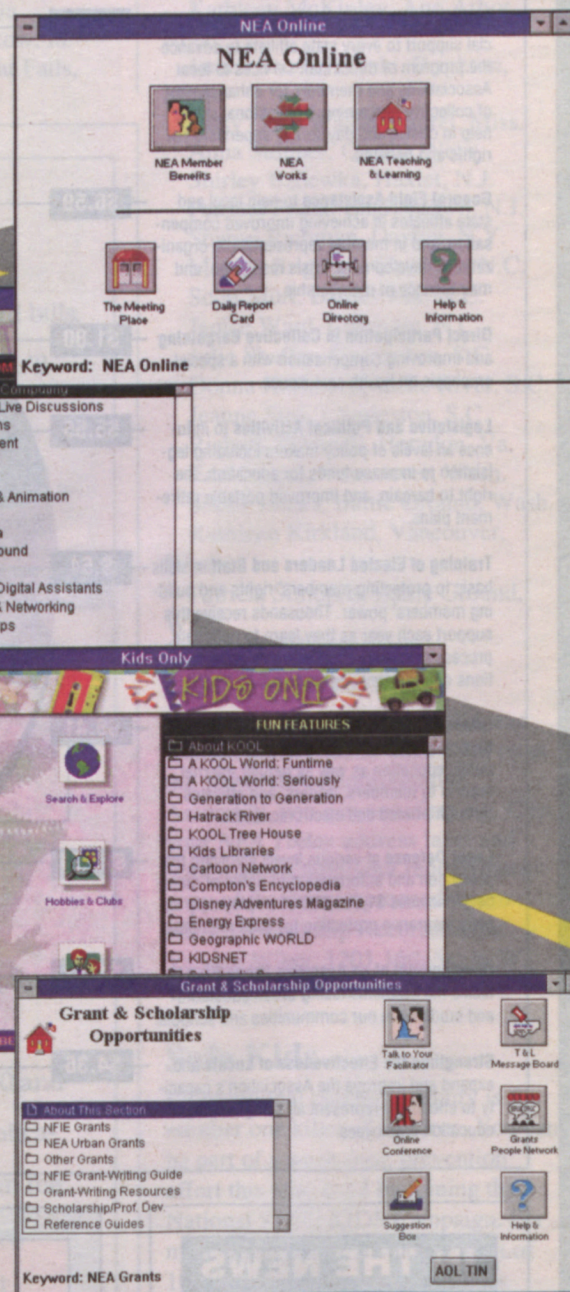
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*NEA members using technology
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Minnesotans Have Minds on the Mayas

A high school media teacher and his students are following a six-person team searching for reasons for the demise of a 9th century people. Your school can join the expedition, too.

Who said the only way to learn about a country you can't visit is by reading a book? Dan Eckberg's television students at Hopkins High in Hopkins, Minnesota know better. They're seeing countries and learning about cultures with the aid of electronic communications.

Using computers, satellite hookups, and telephone hotlines, Eckberg's students have already followed a team of cyclists 11,500 miles across the continent of Africa, sat atop Mount Kilimanjaro, and sweltered in the Sahara Desert.

This winter they'll interact with an expedition exploring Central America in search of the classic Maya culture.

You can join them.

How? By following Eckberg and his class as they track the adventures of Dan and Steve Buettner, two world-class bicyclists from Minnesota. Starting last month these two bicyclists, joined by archaeologists and a technical support team, are interacting with students via the Internet, the worldwide computer network.

From classroom or home computer, students can suggest research hypotheses to the Buettners or the

archaeologists at the various Central American digs they've been exploring as part of their "MayaQuest" expedition.

"We hope that someone will ask a question that can't readily be answered," says Hopkins High student Barry Anderson, "and through the online activities, an answer will be found—a discovery!"

Having students "discover" why a civilization as advanced as the Maya collapsed in the 9th century is one key goal for the leaders of the MayaQuest expedition. The more important goal is using interactive learning to discover the cause of the decline and compare it to issues we face today—natural disasters, environmental degradation, and war.

"We want students to dream, dig, and discover," says Eckberg, a 32-year teaching veteran. As part of MayaQuest, Eckberg's students will produce four 45-minute live call-in TV shows that will broadcast via satellite to a national audience.

"Everything that we do will be

kid-centered—kids talking to kids and showing a different way to obtain information," says senior Kim Sweningson.

Ten lesson plans—on topics ranging from Maya hieroglyphics to the Maya creation



Minnesota media teacher Dan Eckberg (inset) believes his students will learn more than just facts by "joining" the team of bicyclists on an expedition in Central America.

myth—have been developed for the interactive expedition. (See next column for details.)

"Through a combination of live call-in television and the Internet," says Eckberg, "we're hoping to build excitement and engagement in learning."

—Cara Elmore

Explore Online!

► For more information about MayaQuest on Internet, e-mail:

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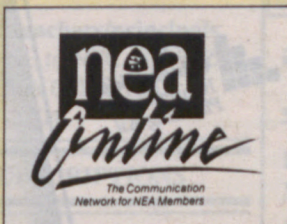
► If you're an NEA Online subscriber, you can access MayaQuest through the America Online gateway to the Internet. At the Go To icon, click on keyword and type Internet. The icon with gopher & WAIS databases is your next click. Select education, and the next icon is the picture of the gopher and the words, "more education resources."

Select from the next screen: K-12 Gophers, then Best of the K-12 on the Internet Resources. Next selection is MayaQuest, and your education choices begin.

► To obtain a free study guide, send a self-addressed 9x12 envelope, stamped with \$1.24 postage to: MayaQuest, 529 South 7th St., Suite 310, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

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TIPS FOR USING NEA ONLINE



Susanne Paper

Gaithersburg (Maryland) Middle School

NEA members in Montgomery County, Maryland are looking for the best practices to deal with school violence. We've found NEA Online to be a wonderful resource. The School Climate Library has a number of files on school violence. An ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education and the NEA Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education digest summarizes NEA urban educators' discussion about school violence and possible solutions. To access the School Climate Library, use the Keyword: "NEA School Climate."

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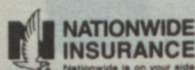
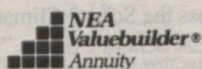
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BOOK BEAT

Welcome Words

Three tributes—one to principals, one to a Virginia high school, and one to the promise of public education.

Voices in the Hall: High School Principals at Work. William Webster. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 81 pp., \$8.

Cal State (Bakersfield) Professor William Webster visited 150 high schools—and was impressed. Candidate for Ripley's Believe It or Not? Not exactly—just a fan of the typically hard-working, kid-centered high school principal.

But along with the praise, Webster takes a few well-aimed shots. He says principals have a long way to go when it comes to motivating teachers, developing coherent leadership styles, pushing for educational innovation, and sharing power.

The School That Refused To Die. Daniel Duke. State University of New York Press, 291 pp., \$18.95.

Faced with desegregation, "budget crises, closure threats, competition from public alternative schools, school

board reversals, and political intrigue," Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond, Virginia survives, maintaining its reputation for educational excellence.

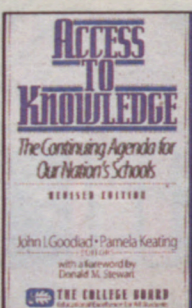
How? By valuing continuity and change, explains University of Virginia education professor—and "Tee-Jay" alum—Daniel Duke. This unique "organizational history" is a page-turner and a profound lesson for troubled schools in this era of reform.

Access to Knowledge: The Continuing Agenda for Our Nation's Schools. Revised edition.

John Goodlad, Pamela Keating, editors. College Entrance Examination Board, 355 pp., \$16.95.

Contributors to this essay collection—James Comer, Jeannie Oakes, Asa Hilliard, et al—all thankfully agree on the importance of quality public schools. What they urge is equity and access for those historically underserved.

—Stefanie Weiss



The NEA Professional Library's Top Ten

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Current Rank

- 1 **Student Portfolios**, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. (\$9.95) Insights into using portfolios to assess and enhance student learning. (#2901-1-00-FB) [1]
- 2 **The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)**, by Bosch and Kersey. Member's price: \$14.95. (#1862-1-10-FB) [6]
- 3 **Toward Inclusive Classrooms**, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. (\$9.95) Students with special needs can learn with their peers. (#2903-8-00-FB) [3]
- 4 **Innovative Discipline**, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. (\$9.95) New discipline strategies that teachers say really work! (#2904-6-00-FB) [2]
- 5 **Team Organization: Promise, Practices and Possibilities**, by Thomas O. Erb and Nancy M. Doda. (\$12.95) A step-by-step guide for middle schools. (#3075-3-00-FB)
- 6 **Time Strategies**, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. (\$9.95) Ways busy teachers restructure school time. (#2902-X-00-FB) [4]
- 7 **Children of Promise: Literate Activity in Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Classrooms**, by Heath and Mangiola. \$8.95. (#1844-3-00-FB) [11]
- 8 **Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools**, by Stein and Sjostrom. Member's price: \$15.95. (#1864-8-00-FB) [8]
- 9 **NEA Federal Income Tax Guide for Education Employees (Tax Year 1994)**, by John Arch. (\$8.95) The educator's guide to a less taxing April 15. (#2228-9-00-FB)
- 10 **School-Based Change**, NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. (\$9.95) Tips, tricks, and techniques for avoiding the pitfalls of school restructuring. (#2905-4-00-FB) [5]

The numbers in brackets indicate last month's rank, if any. All the resources listed above are published by and available from the NEA Professional Library, a service for NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community. To order any book listed here or for more information, call 800/229-4200. (Note: a shipping and handling charge is added to all orders.)

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The NEA is proud to present a breakthrough benefit for NEA members. It's the NEA Home Financing ProgramSM, provided by Prudential Home Mortgage, a leader in home financing. Whether you want to buy a home, are refinancing the one you own, or are looking for a home equity loan, we believe the NEA Home Financing Program offers the best overall combination of service, benefits and value on the market today. Here are some of the benefits you'll enjoy when buying a home or refinancing a mortgage with the program.

● Competitive Interest Rates.

The program starts with some of the best mortgage interest rates around. You can call anytime for a free quote at 1-800-NEA-4-YOU.

● Full Refund Of Appraisal Cost.

After closing, your appraisal cost will be refunded in full. This represents a value of \$360 or more.

● Loan Commitment* Before You Start House Hunting.

Get your mortgage commitment before you start shopping for a home. You'll save time and when you're ready to negotiate with sellers, you'll be in a stronger bargaining position.

● Low Origination Fee And A Zero-Point Option.

Because we know that every dollar you save helps increase your home buying power, the program offers a low origination fee. You can even choose a *zero-point option*, reducing your up-front, out-of-pocket expenses even more.

● No Charge For Your Credit Report.

We'll even pay for your credit report when you apply.

● Fast Loan Decision.

If you've already found the right home, you can get a loan decision in as little as 24 hours after you submit your application.**

● No-Cost, 60-Day Interest Rate Lock Option.

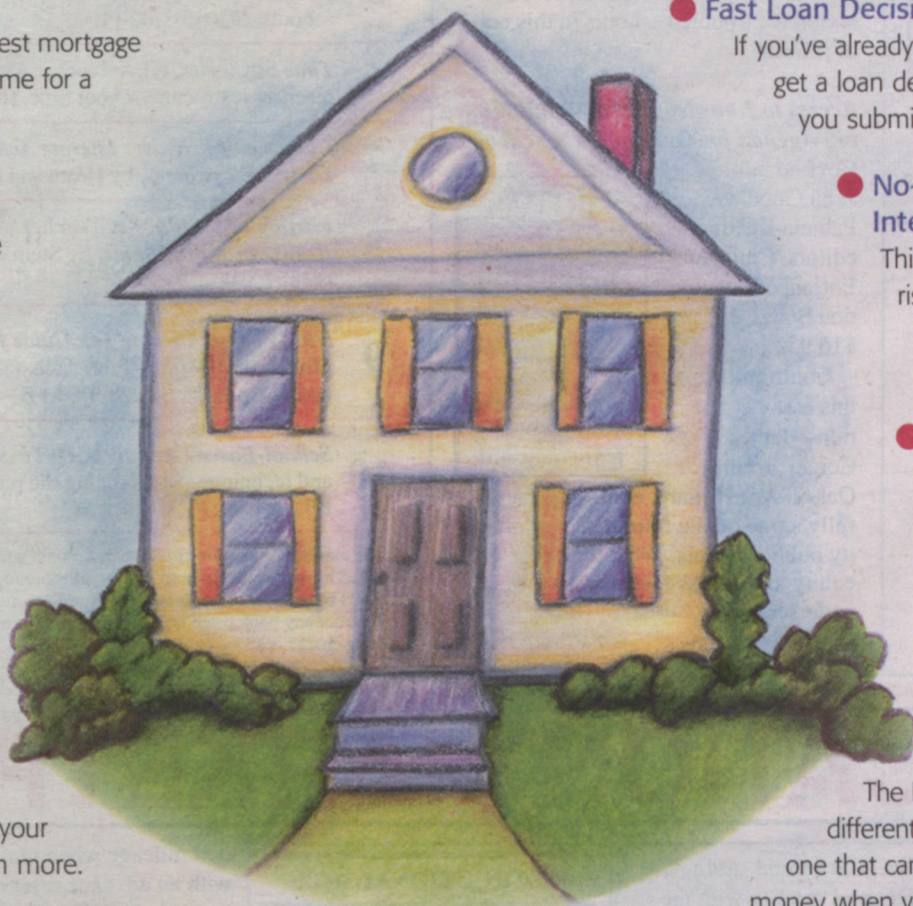
This option gives you protection from rising interest rates by locking in your rate at application or anytime up to five business days before closing.

● Low Down Payment Option.

If you thought you couldn't come up with the down payment, this option can make the difference. With the proper documentation, your down payment can be as low as 5%***

● Special First-Time Home Buyer Program.

The First HomeSM program offers two different low down payment options, with one that can be as low as 3% of your own money when you have financial help from your family or a community organization.***



Call Today For Information And Advice...Or To Apply.

We know you're busy. So, experienced mortgage counselors are available for extended hours, 8 a.m. to midnight, Eastern time, Monday through Friday. You can call from your home or workplace when it's convenient for you. A counselor will review the wide range of mortgages and home equity loans available, and help determine which one is best for you. There's no obligation, just information. And when you're ready, you can apply right over the phone.

1-800-NEA-4-YOU

(1-800-632-4968)

NEA Home Financing ProgramSM

Yes, please send me information about this new member benefit. I am:

- ☐ Ready to buy or refinance a home.
- ☐ Thinking about buying a home and want to get a loan commitment before I start shopping.
- ☐ Looking for my first home and interested in low down payment options.
- ☐ Interested in how a home equity loan can help me. (Not available in every state)

Name _____ Social Security Number _____
(For membership identification only)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Optional:
My Telephone () _____ The Best Time To Reach Me _____ am _____ pm

Please mail to: NEA Home Financing ProgramSM
Prudential Home Mortgage
Post Office Box 84

THF 035 3/95 Minneapolis, MN 55440-8712

Or call: 1-800-NEA-4-YOU

nea Member Benefits

All loans are offered and originated by
Prudential Home Mortgage

* Your loan commitment will be subject to the terms and conditions contained in the loan commitment letter for this program. Call a mortgage counselor for details.
** Eligibility requirements for the 24-hour loan decision include: Primary, purchase transactions with a down payment of 20% or more and a signed purchase contract. Condominiums and co-operative properties are not eligible. Also, because your loan decision is not subject to an appraisal, you may want to consult your legal advisor to include an appraisal contingency in your purchase contract. Other conditions may apply. Contact a mortgage representative for details.
*** Eligibility for the low down payment options is limited to primary, purchase transactions and a maximum loan amount of \$203,150. Other conditions apply. Contact a mortgage representative for details.
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Example - 30-year \$100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 9%, APR 9.209%, 360 \$804.63 monthly payments.
Example - 20-year \$100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 8.125%, APR 8.377%, 240 payments at \$844.24 a month.
15-year \$100,000 mortgage: Fixed, simple interest rate 9%, APR 9.317%, 180 \$1,014.27 monthly payments. 6-month ARM, initial simple interest rate 5%, APR 7.875% (subject to increase), 6 \$536.83 monthly payments, semi-annual adjustments thereafter. 1-year ARM, initial simple interest rate 7%, APR 7.185% (may increase), 12 \$665.31 monthly payments, annual adjustments thereafter. 10/1-year ARM, initial simple interest rate 9%, APR 8.932% (may increase), 120 \$804.63 monthly payments, annual adjustments thereafter. 7 YEAR ADVANTAGE, simple interest rate 8.5%, APR 8.861%, 83 \$768.92 monthly payments; 1 \$93,847.22 payment at maturity. 5 YEAR ADVANTAGE, simple interest rate 8.5%, APR 8.962%, 59 \$768.92 monthly payments; 1 \$96,258.70 payment at maturity.
Information in this ad is accurate as of the date of printing and is subject to change at anytime without notice. Equal Housing Opportunity.

FOR YOUR BENEFIT

“Over the last three years, rates of home ownership have been declining,” says Bonnie O'Dell, director of consumer affairs for Fannie Mae. “A lot of people were creditworthy but for some reason or other, they were being shut out of home ownership. That's changing now.”

Just three years ago, Fannie Mae—formerly the Federal National Mortgage Association—had very strict rules for the mortgages it would buy.

First-time buyers had to have a clean credit history, a substantial down payment and a fairly low debt ratio—which is the amount of debt-to-income a home buyer would incur with a mortgage. There are still guidelines in place, but “we've become much more flexible,” O'Dell says.

Although it's the bank where you apply for a mortgage that decides whether to approve your application, it's really the agencies like Fannie Mae that set the guidelines. That's because local banks don't have enough capital to make hundreds of mortgage loans, so few banks keep these mortgages on their books.

Local banks underwrite—that is, examine and approve—the loans, package them and resell them. The players in the secondary market—government agencies that go by the nicknames Fannie Mae, Ginnie Mae and Freddie Mac—buy up mortgage packages, convert them into securities, and resell them to investors.

Lender flexibility is showing in several key places—including down payment and debt ratio rules—to name two.

Although 10 percent was once the minimum down payment, Fannie Mae has a program to buy loans with 5 percent down payments “or even less,” O'Dell says. To find out if there is such a program in your area, call the agency at 800/732-6643. You might also ask about various city and state employer-assisted housing programs.

The old debt ratio guidelines required that you pay no more than 25 to 28 percent of your gross monthly income on a mortgage. Now a lender is much more likely to let you go to 33 percent for the mortgage and 38 percent or higher for your total debt.

And, if you live in an area where housing costs are extremely high, you might get a higher ratio approved by showing that you're already paying the same amount in rent.

But no matter how flexible lenders get, you'll still have to do some financial planning to prepare to buy your first home. You can start by cutting back on discretionary spending and paying down credit card debt.

Get a free copy of your credit report, from TRW, P.O. Box 2350, Chatsworth, CA, 91313-2350. Include a verification of your name and current address, which might be a photocopy of a billing from a major creditor, a utility bill, or your driver's license. Print your name, middle initial, last

Heads Up Home Buyers



If buying your first home seems like only a pipe dream, look again. Mortgage lenders are more flexible than ever, and there are more mortgage options to choose from.

name, and spouse's first name. Provide addresses for the past five years. Sign the request. You should receive the report in a few weeks.

Clean up any errors on the report by writing to the merchants who made the error and to the credit bureau. According to O'Dell, an excellent credit rating means that you don't have more than two payments that were over 30 days late in one year. “Excellent doesn't mean perfect,” she says. “It means a pattern of paying your bills on time.”

Even if your record isn't excellent, you needn't give up. Lenders have become much more lenient about credit problems, says O'Dell.

The real questions are: Did you have good credit before you had the problem? What was the reason for the problem? And have you come through it and reestablished yourself?

If you know up front that you'll have trouble getting a mortgage either because you have a credit problem or because you're self-employed and haven't established an income history

yet, consider a mortgage broker.

The best brokers act as your advocate, cutting through the red tape and helping you to qualify for a loan. Their services cost you nothing because they're paid by the bank.

But, as in every business, there are some unscrupulous operators, so make certain up front that you'll pay no extra fee to the broker.

Finally, you must think about the best type of mortgage for you. The variety available today can help you buy a more expensive house without increasing your monthly payment:

➤ Balloon mortgages offer a set rate that is lower than a fixed rate and higher than an adjustable rate for a specified term, usually five or seven years. At the end of that time, you must get a new mortgage at whatever terms are available. Rates are currently about 7.5 percent. This is a good choice if you know you'll spend less than seven years in the house.

➤ The 15-year fixed-rate loan, which carries a lower rate—about 8.5 percent today—has become popular with trade-up buyers, according to Keith Gumbinger at HSH Associates, a mortgage research firm in Butler, New Jersey.

➤ Adjustable rate loans have fallen out of favor because they have nowhere to go but up. But, at an average rate of about 6.8 percent today, they can still be attractive to some first-time buyers.

Resources

➤ The Mortgage Book, by John R. Dorfman, Consumer Reports Books, \$15.95.

➤ Home Buyer's Mortgage Kit, from HSH Associates of Butler, New Jersey, \$20. This kit includes “How to Shop for Your Mortgage,” a 44-page booklet. This kit also includes a listing of mortgage rates around the country. Call 800-UPDATES or 201/838-3330.

➤ The following 12-page booklets—“Mortgage Strategies for Today's Home Buyers,” “The Mortgage Refinance Kit,” and “Affording Your First Home”—are available by sending a check for \$3 each to HSH Associates, Dept. SM, 1200 Route 23, Butler, NJ 07405.

—Mary Rowland

NEA Member Benefits Offers New Mortgage Program

If you're in the market for a home, consider the NEA Home Financing Program, provided by Prudential Home Mortgage.

If you're a first-time buyer, a special program features down payments as low as 5 percent. And if you qualify, only 3 percent of the down payment needs to be your own money.

The NEA Home Financing Program offers all members an ideal combination of competitive rates, exceptional service, and an excellent choice of home financing options.

The program features a full refund of your appraisal fee after closing, no charge for your credit report, fast loan decisions, service for the life of the loan, free prequalification analysis, and a loan commitment before you start house hunting.

The NEA Home Financing Program also offers home equity loans in most states.

To speak to a mortgage counselor for more information, call 1-800-NEA-4-YOU (1-800-632-4968) from 8 a.m. to midnight, ET, Monday to Friday.

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"Thanks to the help
of NEA Valuebuilder®
Annuity, our retirement
looks pretty rosy."



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Program helped us buy our
home and saved us money!"



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with no annual fee and
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our family knows
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future."

Our Pledge to You

NEA Member Benefits offers quality products in a competitive nationwide market with broad accessibility to the NEA membership... supported by superior service, a consumer education program designed to help members be better consumers of financial, investment, insurance, and other products, and a process to resolve consumer concerns fairly.

NEA Member Benefits Mission Statement

For more information on NEA Member Benefits programs, call 1-800-637-4636
(Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET).

nea Member
Benefits

IDEA EXCHANGE

Good Deeds

Each of my sixth grade social studies students must perform a good deed every single day.

My students also perform good deeds as a group—like overseeing food preparation and clothing and toy drives for the needy, making and sending cards to area nursing homes, and contributing to charitable groups.

My classes have challenged other sixth grade classrooms in our state to do the same; more than 350 have accepted.

As a matter of record, last year my 142 students performed 27,473 good deeds—and this year's classes are keeping pace with them.

Stephanie Kemmerlin
Heard County Middle School
Franklin, Georgia

Tea Tags in Teaneck

My interest in tea bags as a teaching tool began about 15 years ago when my second graders started collecting tea bag tags to better understand the meaning of one million.

As the collection grew over the next few years, we wrapped the tags into groups of 100, placed each 100 into a small plastic bag, and put every 10 bags of 100—or 1,000 tags—into an empty cigar box.

A few years ago, the national media picked up the story and tea bag donations started pouring in. One tea company even donated a million bags.

An entire curriculum has evolved. In math, for example, kids count with tea tags instead of plastic chips. They graph the tea tags they count and record the daily tea tag pen pal mail on a special graph.

But the most exciting thing about this whole project came last year when a small tea company actually created a tea to honor my class. And the best part is that a portion of the profits will go toward the purchase of new books for our school library.

Rosanne Ponchick
Whittier Elementary School
Teaneck, New Jersey

Transcendental Travel

Everyone's got a piece of the act in our schoolwide celebration of cultural diver-

sity, which this year is titled "Friendship Around the World."

Each class studies a different country—and hangs its flag in the main hallway. Each month, a different class presents a program from the country it's been assigned, often including slides, cultural dances, and ethnic foods. In keeping with the theme, the school lunch menu often features food from the country being studied.

Each student keeps a travel diary full of notes about the country of the month. Like a passport, the diary is stamped upon entering "foreign soil."

We kicked off this project with a rally where the kids yelled the word for "friendship" in the language of the country they'd be researching.

Sandra Ahlberg
West Elementary School
Worthington, Minnesota



OUR SUMMER SCHOOL PAYS \$2,000, BUT YOU HAVE TO DO YOUR HOMEWORK.



We know. The last thing most teachers want to think about as summer approaches is more school. But trust us: We have an idea we think you'll like.

We're The Franklin, one of America's largest life insurance companies, and we call our idea the Educators' Internship Program.

Here's how it works. Sign up for the program, and we'll pay you \$200 per week for 10 weeks. Of course, we do require that you make a certain number of sales presentations.

But *when* you make them is entirely up to you. Invite a group of friends to a backyard barbecue. Great. Talk to colleagues after a round of golf or a set of tennis. That's fine, too.

The point is this is an opportunity to enrich your summer, not a way to take it away from you.

There's one more thing we should mention: \$2,000 is just the tip of the Franklin iceberg. We've found that educators, with their superior communications and people skills, make some of our best sales associates.

Of last year's dual-career sales associates, our top earning educator made \$66,000*.

If all this sounds like summer fun to you, fill in the coupon and send it back to us. Or call us at 1-800-272-0122.



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NEA-3-95

Send Your Ideas

Have any tips for this column? Pass them along in one of five ways:

- By mail to Idea Exchange, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.
- By phone, 202/822-7201.
- By FAX, 202/822-7206.
- By NEA Online, keyword *NEA Today*.
- By e-mail. Write NEA Today@aol.com.

Whatever method you choose, please include the name of your local Association and your home and school phone numbers. And if you have some nice art—photos or other illustrations—send those, too.

Letters



WHOSE PEERS?

I read with interest "From Dispute to Dialogue" (Cover Story, February). While I agree we need to teach students how to peacefully resolve conflicts, I believe the current shift toward peer mediation in itself represents an effort by administrators to shift more responsibility onto the shoulders of students.

If we are truly concerned with upgrading standards, we don't need to further stress our students by having them take responsibility for the essential functions of guidance personnel. Students are sent to school to learn, not take the place of staff.

Steve Hindman
Philipsburg, Pennsylvania

EQUAL RIGHTS?

NEA Today hit a low in credibility with "Women Need Not Apply" (Legal Times, December). The article failed to point out that by giving Shannon Faulkner the "right" to attend the Citadel, the right to attend a single-gender military institution will be denied to 2,000 male cadets.

Margaret B. Reese
Lexington, South Carolina

MIXED MESSAGE

I disagree with NEA Today's "zero" for Garrett Redmond, the California school board member who stated that homework burns students out and interrupts family life (Heroes & Zeroes, December). There is an element of truth to his statement, whether or not we educators want to admit it.

We do send a mixed message. We complain that parents are not providing a moral and ethical foundation for their children, yet my second grader often has so much homework that he can't participate in Wednesday night church activities.

We love to talk about Gardner's multiple intelligences, but heavy homework loads make it difficult for students to participate in activities after school.

Learning does take place in non-academic settings—and while homework has its place, it should be a very small one.

Julie Hollenberg
Westminster, Maryland

HEALTHY MESSAGE

On behalf of the 17,000 members of the National Association of School Psychologists, I wish to thank you for addressing youth depression and suicide (Health, December) and for reminding your readers that their school psychologist is an important resource.

Youth suicide rates are up over 300 percent since 1950, making suicide the second leading cause of death among adolescents. School psychologists, because of their specialized training and accessibility, are ideally equipped to assist classroom teachers in identifying and helping children at risk.

School psychologists can also provide invaluable assistance in those tragic instances when a student does commit suicide. They can step in to help classmates manage their grief and to prevent copy-cat acts.

Children can't learn if their emotional needs are ignored. Please continue to educate your readers on these important mental health topics.

Susan Safranski
President, National Association of School Psychologists
Silver Spring, Maryland

BOUNDARIES

Barbara Bye's argument in favor of teen curfews was very convincing (Debate, December). When I was growing up (I'm 38

now), children had parent-imposed curfews. I came home every evening when the street lights came on until I was 16.

Today, many parents are not prepared to raise children. Kids are growing up without boundaries. In too many cases, parents don't know where their children are or what they're doing.

Yes, we need to reinvent the family, but adults have to empower their children to make good choices by modeling proper parenting skills and setting appropriate boundaries.

And adults must see that kids have places to go, like the Chaska Community Center, built in 1990 in my area. When my children are there, we know they are appropriately supervised and safe. They also know we'll pick them up by 8:45 p.m., since their bedtimes are 9:00 and 9:30 p.m.—a parent-imposed curfew.

Sheryl Hough
Chanhassen, Minnesota

EQUALITY REDUX

In your latest bout of silliness—"A Story About Size" (Human Rights, December), you quote psychologist Christian Crandall, who suggests we make all students welcome by "modeling acceptance of large, little, tall, and thin kids and being intolerant of intolerance in the classroom." He has obviously been approved by your 1994 Minister of Political Correctness.

When are you going to stop publishing the drivel that comes out of every "victimized" group in our society? Will the PC Police, led by people like Norma Cantu, haul us up on civil rights charges when we encourage our kids to eat right and maintain a reasonable body weight?

Although I've been a lifelong

Democrat and have traditionally supported liberal causes, I've become more and more exasperated with the current trend toward "leveling and equity." All idiots are equal, too. Or should I say all severely intellectually challenged persons?

Harvey Center
Danbury, Connecticut

UNIFORMITY?

In "A Trip to Hell," Professor Robert McNergney frames the central question of how a teacher can "make some justifiably discriminating decisions about instructional needs" (Research Clues, November).

He points out that isolating all the Hispanic pupils in a predominately Asian school [in a pull-out Spanish bilingual class], is not a justifiable decision. Clearly, each pupil needs to be understood individually.

Should a school adopt a uniform program or an individualized one? The solution: all pupils in a school should do essentially the same thing. If the program is comprehensively designed, all students will benefit, despite their individual variations of culture and learning style. The prerequisite: clear and acknowledged standards.

Thanks for a thought-provoking article.

Andrew Smith
Ann Arbor, Michigan

IMPRESSIONS

I was deeply disappointed by "Books, Ghosts 'n Goblins" (Legal Times, November), which directed tongue-in-cheek criticisms at the religious rights instead of focusing on facts.

As an educator, I would not want the Impressions reading series in my classroom. I find it chilling that although "make-believe spells" and role-playing sorcerers are permissible in the classroom, any view that mentions God is not. I find it unusual that Impressions teaches tolerance of all views—except Christian beliefs.

If we are to make sure that tolerance is taught and quality education is provided, we should make sure that all views are presented to children, even those of fundamentalist parents.

Jill M. Shope
Snow Shoe, Pennsylvania

'EASY WAY OUT'

Robert Arthur's letter (November) praised Adele Jones "for her high standards in teaching" (Sounding Board, September). Yet in his hurry to endorse high teaching standards, he reaches some clearly questionable conclusions.

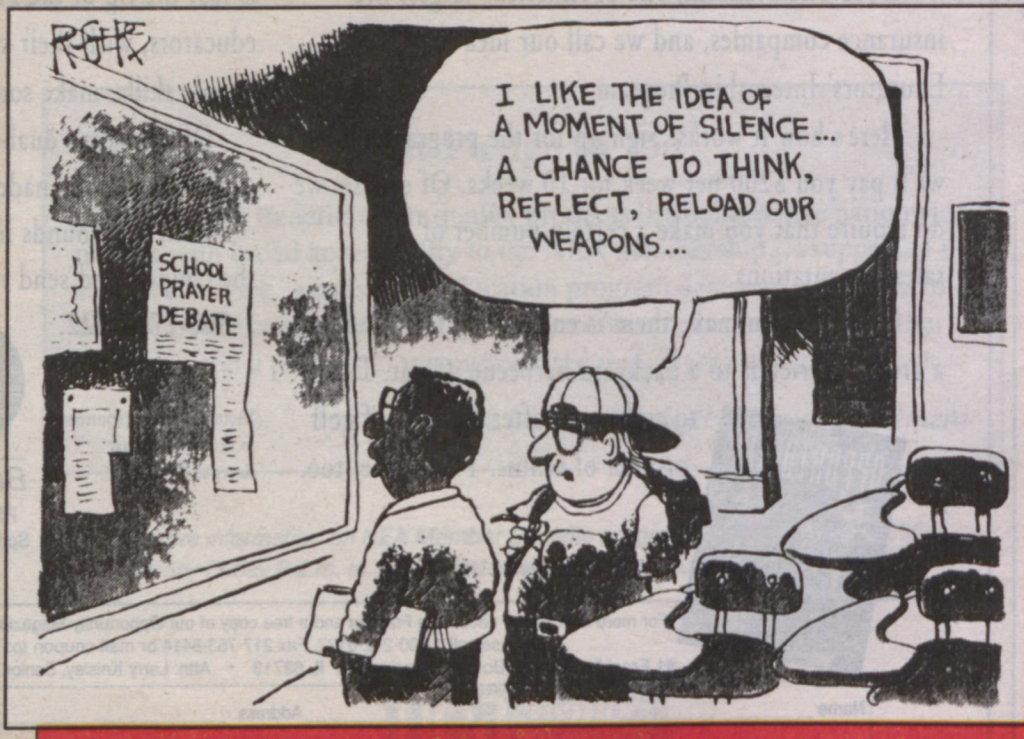
Arthur's conclusion that those who refuse to accept failures are "unscholarly, non-astute, mediocre instructors" is both an insult and a self-revelation. His assumption that teachers who don't give a lot of low grades are "wishy-washy" is just as wrong. It's the "wishy-washy" teacher who dishes out lots of Fs instead of working to correct the problem. Giving the F is the easy way out.

It seems to me that teachers who are doing their job will find ways to help as many kids succeed as possible. Tough grading doesn't necessarily mean good teaching.

Like Arthur, I'm proud of the letters my students have written me over the years. But they haven't written to congratulate me on being such a hard-ass they couldn't get a passing grade.

Instead, they praise me and my colleagues for refusing to accept poor or incomplete work. They write to thank us for helping them believe in themselves and for providing them with marketable skills in today's world.

Lee VerMum
Cedar Falls, Iowa



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Debate



YES

Does Suspension Work?

Mark Ambrose is a guidance coordinator at Baker High School in Baldwinsville, New York. In his 24-year career in Ohio and New York, Ambrose has taught social studies and worked as a counselor. He is a member of the Baldwinsville Teachers Association.



NO

Marilyn Gibson has developed a suspension alternatives program as vice-principal of Center Street Middle School in Birmingham, Alabama. Gibson was a teacher from 1972 to 1993 and is a member of the Birmingham Education Association.

When common sense prevails, suspension can be an effective and appropriate tool to modify a student's behavior. If nothing else, an argument for suspension can certainly be made on behalf of the other students in the class and the teacher. Why should they be subjected to continual disruptions?

An adolescent by nature will test limits, question rules, and challenge authority. We want to be sensitive to this process, but not at the expense of a teacher's mental health or of the academic atmosphere for other students.

Most teachers will agree that too much time and energy is devoted to classroom management when, typically, it's the same one or two students who consistently break the rules. Many of us are tired of seeing the learning process for a majority of students destroyed by a small number of students who repeatedly refuse to cooperate with the teaching staff.

In the high school where I work, we have a progressive discipline policy that works. When students break the rules, they're sent to an in-school planning room to discuss differences with teaching staff and to prepare a written plan of action delineating how they will change their behavior.

This strategy—based upon Glasser's 10 Steps—has worked effectively because it forces the student and teacher to focus on the student's behavior and allows for dialogue in a non-threatening environment.

It also works because it is a continuation of our middle school and junior high discipline programs, so our students know what to expect.

Of course, the strategy doesn't work 100 percent of the time. Students who repeatedly break the same rules are sent to detention after school and on Saturdays. We use suspensions only when all else fails to change student behavior, or when students commit serious offenses, such as fighting or bringing a weapon to school.

Do these suspensions work? For a small minority of students, no number

of suspensions will change behavior. For the vast majority of kids, however, suspension from school can work.

To make suspension a successful strategy, frequent communication between the child's home and the teacher, counselor, or administrator before and during the suspension is critical.

Parents who are contacted early and frequently are much more likely to work with us and support the efforts of the school if a suspension does take place. If I call a parent with a positive report when things are going well, it increases the probability of that parent being more receptive when I have a concern to discuss.

All too often, students are simply removed from school, and when they're allowed to return, we expect changes.

To help make suspensions a learning experience for students, it's important that parents implement their own set of consequences at home. Suspension shouldn't become just another day off from school.

Intervention by the school counselor during and after the suspension period can provide both the parent and student with ideas and strategies for modifying the behavior and ways to positively reinforce this at home. This is the most overlooked—yet most important—aspect of a successful suspension policy.

If we as educators are to be faulted, I think it's because in our attempts to be caring and empathetic with our students, we have expanded the parameters of acceptable behavior. We often look the other way and accept excuses.

We need to draw the line earlier, set clear and firm expectations, and hold our students accountable for their actions.

Are suspensions the only answer to discipline problems? Of course not, but as an alternative to be used when other approaches have failed and in conjunction with parental and staff support, they can be effective.

Suspension, as it's most often used in schools today, is a "quick fix" intended more to relieve the frustration of adults than to address the needs of children.

Yes, as a teacher, I too have cried for the removal of students with whom I couldn't cope, and as an administrator I've done the suspending. But does it work to accomplish the goals of education? Rarely.

Education is providing for the mental and moral development of individuals through instruction. Suspension, by its very definition, interrupts and withholds that instruction.

Those who argue that when disruptive students are suspended, at least other students receive instruction in peace would do well to remember the temporary and rebounding nature of suspension.

What happens when the suspended child returns? My experience in most cases has been that, at best, the child returns little changed and soon presents the same problem behaviors. At worst, the child returns with less self-esteem, less confidence, less trust, less sense of belonging, and less readiness to learn.

Problems often escalate in frequency and severity for a child "on the rebound," and the situation deteriorates each time the cycle is repeated. The quality of the learning environment is then diminished.

In my urban middle school of approximately 500 students, examination of statistics from a recent school year shows that out of 89 suspensions, 84 involved "repeaters"—students who were suspended at least once before. Fourteen were suspended twice, 10 were suspended three times, four were suspended four times, and two were suspended five times in one school year.

For the repeaters, most of the subsequent suspensions were for the same or very similar offenses. Did suspension work for those students?

If not suspension, then what? No

one technique or method works for every student in every school, but I've had success with several.

► **In-house isolation.** In-house isolation allows the temporary removal of the student from the classroom without removing him from the school. When properly supervised and structured so that the student continues to receive instruction and is held responsible for following rules, in-house isolation has been very effective.

► **Parents in school.** Bringing parents to school, rather than sending children home to their parents, has worked well, particularly at the middle school level.

Parents can sit in classes, follow the student's schedule, and attend team "court" with the student.

► **Ownership of action.** Having students exercise ownership of their own actions by applying immediate and appropriate consequences works because the students get the feedback they need to begin evaluating and modifying their own behavior. Suspension, on the other hand, disconnects students from the natural cause-and-effect cycle. Ownership of action helps them make the connections.

► **Positive peer pressure.** I've found that just as peer pressure can be a negative influence, it can also be a very positive one when channeled into support groups, partnerships, conflict mediation, even student court.

► **Mainstreaming marginal students.** Students who are "marginal"—somehow disconnected from the learning environment by lack of success or motivation—are the ones who most often end up being suspended.

These students can be brought into the mainstream through incentive programs, peer-based connections, special interest activities, or athletics.

As educators, we are responsible for finding ways to meet the needs of students. Suspension doesn't work because it doesn't change behavior. When we use it, we need to ask whose needs are really being met.

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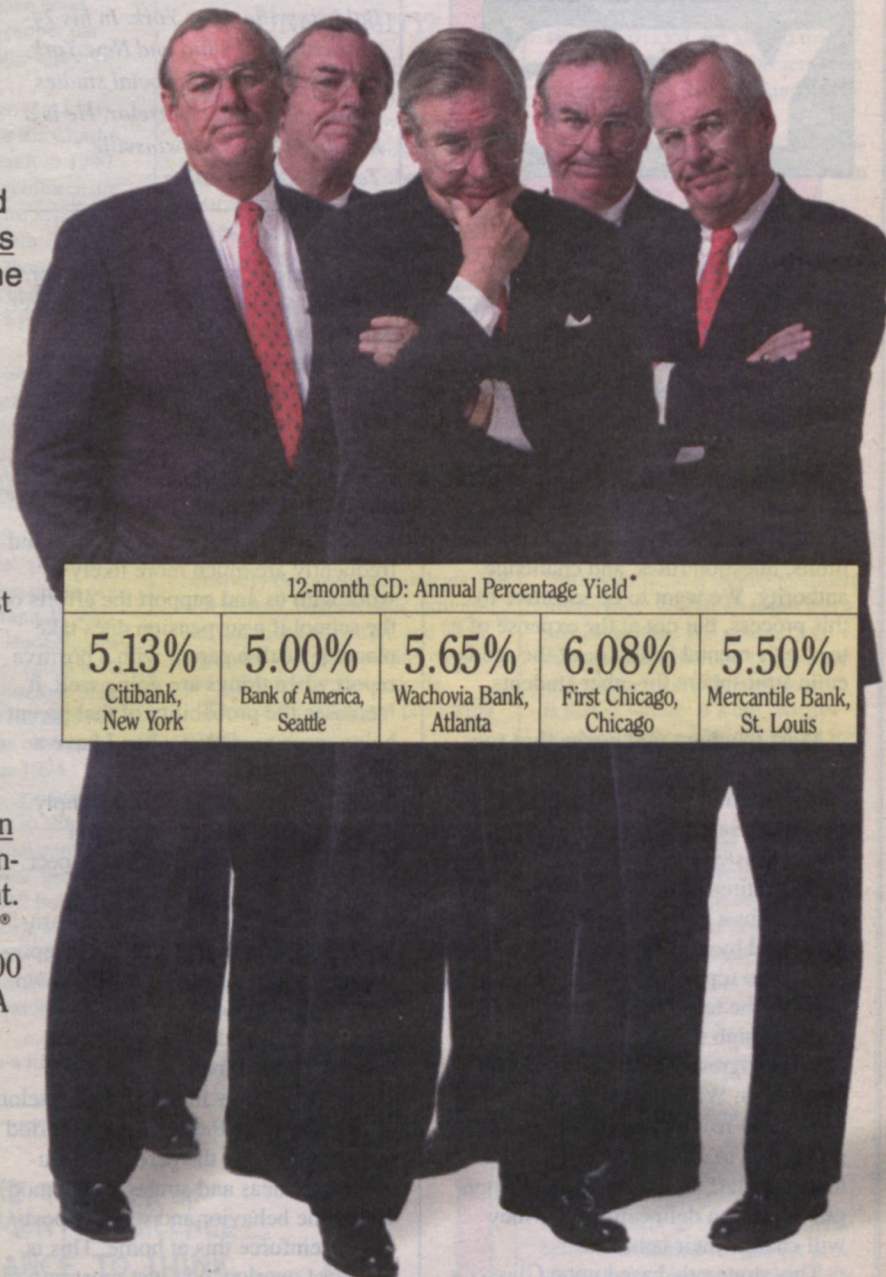
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